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CONVERSATIONS

RESPECTING

INFANT BAPTISM.



EUGENIO AND EPIENETUS;

OR,

CONVERSATIONS

RESPECTING

THE EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF

Infant Baptism.

CONTAINING

AN ATTEMPT TOWARDS AN IMPARTIAL
STATEMENT OF THE ARGUMENTS FOR THIS PRACTICE
AND AGAINST IT.

By William Innes. *AM20*

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY BALFOUR, KIRKWOOD, AND CO.

FOR OLIPHANT AND BALFOUR, HUNTER'S SQUARE;

AND SOLD BY J. AND A. DUNCAN, AND M. OGLE, GLASGOW;

J. M'LAREN, STIRLING; D. PEAT, PERTH; E. LESLIE,

DUNDEE; G. CLARKE, ABERDEEN; AND

W. BUTTON, PATERNOSTER ROW,

LONDON.

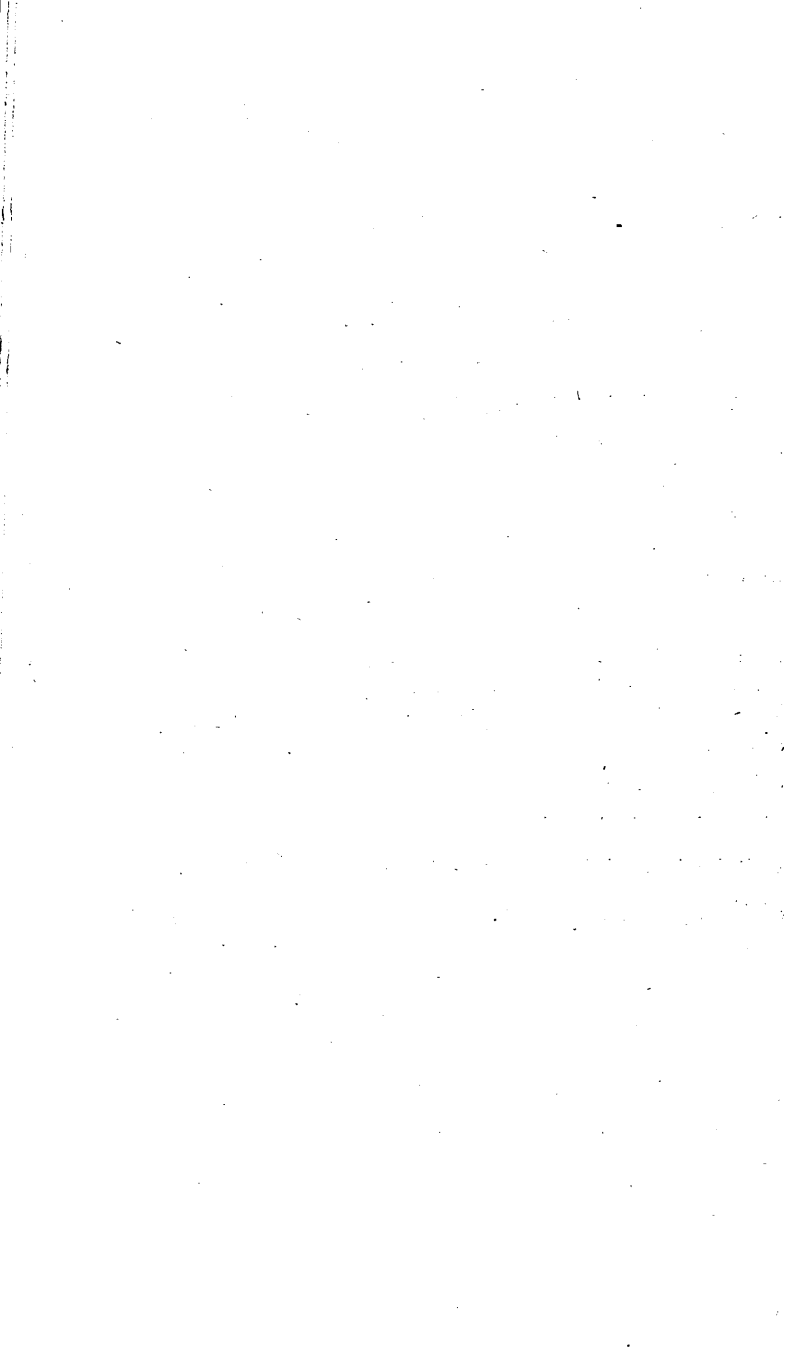
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Those who have been in the habit of discussing any important subject in conversation, must be aware that a leading principle or argument is apt to occur more frequently than would, perhaps, be admissible in a regular dissertation. This the reader is requested to bear in mind, in reading the two first Conversations that follow. To some, the recurrence of the same argument, though introduced in different connections, will not perhaps be acceptable. This to others, however, may not be without its use. The design of publishing these Conversations, will be found sufficiently explained, by turning to the letter inserted at the conclusion of them.



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CONVERSATIONS, &c.

CONVERSATION I.

Introduction... We ought to be influenced, not by difficulties merely affecting subordinate parts of the proof of a proposition, but by the general preponderance of evidence... On arguing from inference... This applied to the Abrahamic Covenant... How far the law respecting Circumcision resembles that regarding Baptism... In what respect blessings are promised to the Seed of Believers... Whether consistency requires that children should partake of the Lord's Supper as well as Baptism.

Eugenio. I AM happy, my dear friend, I have met with you; I shall now be able to ascertain how far there is truth in a flying report I heard the other day, that you had changed your sentiments in regard to infant baptism: Is it so?

Epenetus. Such flying reports generally move a little too fast. It is certainly true that I have of late seen objections to the argument in favour of infant baptism which I did not see formerly. It cannot, however, with propriety, be said, I have yet changed my mind on the subject in question. I have considered it indeed my duty to relinquish

the practice of baptizing infants till I see how these objections are to be removed. This I do on that plain broad principle, in which I am happy to think that you, my dear friend, will cordially agree with me, that whatever is not of faith is sin. I have many inducements, you well know, to maintain the same sentiments on this subject I have held formerly. But when, in reflecting on the argument in favour of infant baptism, a powerful objection occurs, I feel myself neither at liberty to decline examining it as minutely as possible, nor to resist the inference to which it may lead me, if it should even amount to a relinquishment of the practice I formerly observed. I find many so shy in discussing such a subject, that I should not probably have thought of introducing it; but it gives me great pleasure that you have done so. There is no one I should be more disposed to consult on a point of this kind. I believe you are well acquainted with the various aspects of the argument, and there are not many in whose candour and friendship I have such entire confidence. While I think I can most conscientiously say, I have no desire but to discover the truth on the subject in question, I would not be understood to insinuate, that those who may ultimately differ from me have not the same desire. So far, however, as regards external situation, I conceive I am now placed in one peculiarly favourable for enquiry. I have not the one side to defend more than the other. If I can get my difficulties satisfactorily

removed, and see the argument clearly in favour of infant baptism, I should have no hesitation in at once resuming the practice. If, then, you have a little leisure at present, I should be happy to avail myself of your general acquaintance with the argument, as well as of your discernment, to assist me in ascertaining if my objections are founded on any mistake in point of fact, or fallacy in point of reasoning.

Eug. I acknowledge I have at present no very particular engagement, and I should be happy if any thing I could suggest could remove any of your difficulties. You are not, however, to expect that I am to be able to meet, all at once, every objection that can be started on a subject so much agitated. Neither do I think that the mere existence of difficulties, which you cannot remove in the argument in support of infant baptism, is a proper ground on which you ought to make up your opinion on a point of this nature. Perhaps difficulties equally great might be urged on the other side of the question. This is one of those topics, in regard to which it has always appeared to me, many plausible things might be said both for and against it. Your opinion then, in such a case, I conceive ought to be formed by the general predominance of the argument, and not by those minuter objections which perhaps could be equally brought forward on the one side as on the other.

Epen. In this sentiment I most perfectly agree; and, on this account, I have always

thought it objectionable to apply to this subject such language as that which occurs Rom. xiv. 23, "He that doubteth is damned (condemned), if he eat." This language is applied to a case where there was no possibility of error on the one side, while there was such a possibility on the other. If a man had any doubt about eating a particular kind of food, as there was no possibility of his violating the divine law in avoiding that food, he was unquestionably bound not to partake of it. The case, however, is different here. There is at least the *possibility* of error, whatever side you take. Where this is found, every degree of doubt cannot be so completely excluded as when there is on the one side no possibility of going wrong; though even when there is this possibility of error either way, evidence may appear on the one side or the other so satisfactory, as to enable one to act with the utmost confidence. Where arguments are adduced on both sides, in a case in which a man must act either in one way or another, it is certainly the general predominance of the evidence by which we ought to be influenced. I am well aware of the justness of your remark, that it is not every specious or subtle objection to a position that ought to make us question it. There may be such a general preponderance of evidence, that such an objection may be completely overwhelmed by it. But other objections may affect the general body of the evidence itself, and these particularly deserve to be followed out,

as it is necessary, in order consistently to maintain our principles, that the fallacy of such objections should be discovered.

With regard to your remark, that you are not perhaps prepared to meet every difficulty which may be stated; I hope, my dear friend, you distinctly understand the ground on which I wish to enjoy the advantage of conversing with you on this subject. I trust I desire to have the benefit of your conversation, not for the sake of victory, but for the sake of truth. And every man accustomed to enquiry must be sensible, that one may hold a principle on what appeared to him, when examining the subject, very solid evidence, though at an unexpected moment of call, he be not able fully to recollect that evidence, and far less to obviate every objection that may be brought against it.

Eug. But what new difficulties have occurred to you, Epenetus. I should have conceived by this time you would have known the whole range of the argument. Have you adopted the maxim of some baptists, that unless direct precept or example in favour of the doctrine of infant baptism can be quoted, you will not receive it?

Epen. No. I am far from maintaining such a position. I think it would be extremely unjustifiable for us to pretend to prescribe to the great Head of the Church, the way in which he ought to communicate instruction to his people. He certainly may do it by inference as really as by direct precept. We have, I think, an explicit

instance of the Sadducees being blameable in not learning from inference, when they were not acquainted with the doctrine of the resurrection; though God said to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." * My objection, then, is not to the general principle of inference as a mode employed in Scripture to communicate instruction, but to the validity of that individual inference which is employed in the argument by which infant baptism is supported.

Eug. I am happy to find, then, we are so far agreed. The more we can narrow the ground of difference, so much the better. But if you do not object to the principle of inference, I do not see what objection you can have to the common

* Some have remarked, and it would appear very justly, that our Lord here refers to the Sadducees denying, not merely the resurrection, but a future state altogether, or any separate existence of the soul after the death of the body. This is the view given of their tenets, Acts xxiii. 8, and the primary meaning of the word here translated *resurrection*, as well as the verb from which it comes, certainly admits this latitude of interpretation. This view of the passage too, best accords with our Lord's reasoning. His argument is, that the Sadducees ought to have known the doctrine of the separate existence of the soul after death, from God saying, that he was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, in the days of Moses; and of course, long after the death of these patriarchs. It shewed that, in the time of Moses, they were existing in that state of blessedness, which was implied in having God as their God. But whatever view be taken of this passage, it is at least an undoubted example of reasoning from inference. See Dr Campbell's note on Matt. xxii. 23.

argument in favour of infant baptism, from the state of things under the former dispensation. The argument, I am persuaded, you already know as well as I. It is no doubt an argument from inference. But admitting the propriety of this kind of reasoning, it has always appeared to me very conclusive. To me, it is plain that the covenant with Abraham contained the covenant of grace. The seal of that covenant, circumcision, was expressly commanded to be given to his seed in infancy. If the covenant is the same in substance with that under which we are now placed, will it not follow as a clear inference, that though the token or seal of the covenant is changed, the new seal ought now to be applied to the seed of believers as well as the seal that was employed formerly? Now you have already admitted the general propriety of arguing from inference. The only ground on which I can conceive you will not employ this mode of reasoning here, is on the principle of your objecting to the spiritual nature of the Abrahamic covenant. Pray do you question this point?

Epen. You have stated, I think, very fairly, the argument usually adduced for infant baptism, from the covenant with Abraham; and it will perhaps surprise you to learn, that I not only admit the propriety of reasoning from inference on this subject, but that I also acknowledge the spiritual nature of that covenant; and yet I see material objections to the argument drawn from

this quarter. The common way of opposing this argument is by denying the premises, endeavouring to explain away the spiritual nature of the covenant God made with the father of the Jewish nation. This always appeared to me a very unsuccessful attempt, and as I could not admit the views which many baptists take of the Abrahamic covenant, representing it in a great measure as a carnal institution, I could not acquiesce in their conclusions. In reflecting on this argument, however, it occurred to me, that though I could not question the premises, there might be a flaw in the connection between the premises and the conclusion. In other words, that though we were to admit the spiritual nature of the covenant with Abraham, it might not fairly follow from this that we ought to administer baptism to the seed of believers.

The following statement of the argument appears to me a fair one. If, from the resemblance between the covenant with Abraham and the new covenant, (or, if you prefer the mode of expression, from their being the same), we hold that baptism has now come in the room of circumcision, then we must apply the whole law respecting circumcision to baptism, or we must give a reason why we apply one part of it and omit another. It is a generally admitted principle in reasoning, you know, that if an argument can be shewn to prove too much, it must be considered as proving nothing at all. Now, so far as I can at present see, this objection applies

to the argument in question. Thus, the law of circumcision required, not only that Abraham should be circumcised along with all his male children, but that his servants should be so too. Nay, that the servants of every Jew and of every proselyte, as well as the male offspring of these servants, should submit to this rite. Now, I conceive, I must here either hold that a Christian is bound to have every servant under his roof baptised, or I must give a reason why I apply the one part of the law regarding circumcision to baptism, and not the other. If I have no such reason to give, I feel I am chargeable with inconsistency, in thus arguing from inference in one part, and rejecting it in another, where there is the same ground for its application. It does not appear to me that this is a cavil. I know difficult questions may be put on almost any subject. But this objection, so far as I can see at present, materially affects the whole argument. Did it ever particularly occur to you?

Eug. You no doubt well know, that the circumcision of Abraham's servants has often been brought forward in this argument. It has been asked, what evidence is there of their faith? and I must say, I think there is every reason to conclude, that they submitted voluntarily to circumcision, and as the result of the instruction they received respecting the character of the God of Abraham. When we consider the fidelity and assiduity with which Abraham brought up his children and household in the fear of God, to-

gether with the specimen we have of his servants in the character of Eliezer of Damascus, and connect with these the difficulty of supposing that so many servants would submit to so painful a rite as that of circumcision unless from conviction; I think there is every reason to conclude, that Abraham's servants were circumcised in token of their profession, at least, of faith in the true God. Besides, your objection cannot apply to such a country as this. You are not to think of Abraham's servants as similar to ours: they were his slaves, bought with his money, and of course, permanent members of his family. His family was the then existing church of God; and as permanent members of his family, they were professedly members of that church, and hence received the seal connected with it.

Epen. I have often heard what you have stated regarding Abraham's servants, brought forward, and for a time it satisfied me. But my argument is not at all affected by the considerations you have mentioned. It does not depend on the *fact* respecting their character, though it could be fully ascertained; but upon the express *obligation* under which, not only he was placed, but all his posterity, nay, every proselyte to the Jewish religion, to have none uncircumcised under his roof. If any stranger, you know, wished to eat the passover, it was absolutely requisite that all his males should be circumcised. In this respect, one law was to be to the stranger and to him that was home born, (Exod. xii. 49.)

But whatever Abraham's servants were, who had received so much instruction from the venerable patriarch, it is certainly very difficult to conceive that the servants of every proselyte, when he first embraced the Jewish religion, were at once voluntarily to profess, in such a way as to give any satisfactory evidence of sincere obedience, the new religion of their Master. It is, at least, very different from what has ever happened since ; and a profession thus exacted (if I may so express it,) is very different from what any of us would be disposed to view as a profession of Christianity, which we could with propriety receive.

I am aware of what you have suggested, that they were not hired servants but slaves, to whom this law of circumcision refers ; and of course, permanent members of the family. But, when you speak of Abraham's family as *the* church of God at that period, though the language may apply to his family, it will not apply to the family of every individual Jew, or every proselyte. I suppose you could only say of such, they were a *part* of the church of God ; and the same thing may be said now of an individual believer. But my argument may be easily brought to a point ; and here lies the great objection to the argument from circumcision, which I could not remove. Is it absolutely unlawful for a Christian master to retain, as a permanent member of his family, one who is unbaptised ? Suppose he had a number of slaves, is he bound by the Christian law

to have them all baptised? One might naturally infer, from the general character of the gospel, that it was not unlawful for a Christian to have such unbaptised persons under his roof. But we are not here left to inference. There is a specific case stated, (1 Cor. vii. 14.) The believing husband is expressly called to retain the unbelieving wife. Now no one can question that the avowedly unbelieving wife would be unbaptised. It can as little be questioned, that she was a permanent member of her husband's family; surely as much so as any slave under his roof: and yet, instead of its being inconsistent with the Christian law to retain her, he is expressly required by that law to do so.

Here then is a difficulty, of which, if you can give me a satisfactory solution, I shall certainly feel myself much indebted to you. This difference between the application of baptism and circumcision appears to me to affect the whole argument from inference on this subject. Like a parcel of contraband goods aboard a vessel, it condemns the whole cargo. I hope you distinctly perceive how the argument stands. The reasoning in favour of infant baptism, from the covenant with Abraham, is confessedly founded on inference. As baptism, it is said, is the seal or sign of the same covenant with that of which circumcision was formerly the seal, therefore it ought to be observed the same way. But, opposed to this, we have palpable evidence to produce, that the law which regulated circumcision

is not to be applied to baptism. . It was a matter of express obligation, that every individual in the family of a Jew or proselyte, capable from sex of receiving circumcision, was to be circumcised. It is as evident, that one capable of receiving baptism, was to remain in the family of a Christian unbaptised. Unless I can see some ground on which I can admit the inference in the one case, and exclude it in the other, I am irresistibly led to suspect that there is a fallacy in the argument altogether.

The case quoted from 1 Cor. vii. 14. derives peculiar force when compared with what is recorded in the 10th chapter of Ezra. We there learn, that in his days professed unbelieving women were not to remain in a family connection with those Jews who had married them. This quite accords with what has been noticed regarding circumcision. But we have seen that the case is totally different under the New Testament dispensation. Under it, the professed unbeliever is commanded to be retained in the very circumstances in which she was formerly to be put away.

If then there is the same difference between the application of circumcision and baptism, as there is between the way in which the unbelieving wife was to be treated under the law, and the way she is to be treated under the gospel; is there not the same impropriety in looking to the law regarding circumcision for the way in

which we are to observe baptism, as there would be if we were to have recourse to the Old Testament regulations respecting the unbelieving wife to discover the way we ought to treat a person of this description under the gospel? In short, my argument may be stated thus: According to the Old Testament, it was absolutely unlawful for a Jew or a proselyte to have an uncircumcised person under his roof. According to the New, it is not only lawful for a believer to have an unbaptised person in his house, but in certain cases he is expressly commanded to retain such a ⁿone in his family. In like manner, under the [^]Old dispensation, it was unlawful for a believing husband to remain with an unbelieving wife. Under the New, he is commanded to do so. Now as you have no objections to inference, I ask you if the following is not a fair one from these premises: That it is as unreasonable to have recourse to the law of circumcision as a rule for the administration of baptism, as it would be now to resort to the Old Testament law regarding the discontinuance of the matrimonial compact with an unbelieving wife, for regulating the conduct of Christians in such a connection. It may be alleged, indeed, we have a direct rule in the one case, though not in the other. But while the two cases stand precisely on the same footing, the existence of this very rule, in the one, is a specimen of the way in which we are called to reason in the other. Such a palpable deviation from the rule of circumcision, in applying bap-

tism, seems as really to nullify the application of the law of the former to the latter, as the Apostle's direction to the Corinthians nullifies the Old Testament rule respecting the dissolution of the matrimonial compact, where one of the parties was an unbeliever.

Eug. Perhaps one part of your objection may be removed by considering, that slavery is unlawful under the New dispensation. Hence, we should not expect to find Christians in the circumstances to which your objection applies. It is to me very manifest, that the spirit of the gospel is quite inconsistent with slavery ; so that, in the present state of things, your objection cannot at least practically perplex us.

Epen. This, my good friend, is at least cutting the knot, if it does not untie it. I hardly think, upon a little reflection, however, you will find this solution of the difficulty satisfactory. Though I am convinced, with you, that the general spirit of the gospel is hostile to slavery, yet it must be granted, that in the first ages of Christianity, Christian masters had slaves. The *δουλοι* of the New Testament, translated servants in our version, were unquestionably of this description. This, I suppose, you do not dispute. It is manifest, both from what we know of the history of that period, and from the exhortations addressed to them by the Apostles. Thus, when they are addressed as liable to be *buffeted* for their faults, the language plainly implies a state of slavery. Now the Christian masters of those days

Slaves

were not commanded to put away their slaves, they were only directed how to treat them. But can we for a moment suppose, that the Christian head of a family was bound to have all his slaves baptised; or that it was absolutely unlawful to allow them to remain under his roof without receiving this ordinance.

In like manner, I hope you would not exclude all our West India planters from the possibility of being partakers of divine grace; though, it must be confessed, their situation, in a religious point of view, is extremely unfavourable to its influence. Suppose, then, one of them to embrace Christianity. Perhaps, with all the aversion I know you feel, and feel justly, at the slave trade and at slavery, you could not say it was his duty at once to emancipate his slaves. This might manifestly do them a material injury; or the laws of the colony might absolutely prevent him from doing so. Nor is it an imaginary case. It may easily be supposed to exist in different parts of the world. Now, in such circumstances, if the law of circumcision were applied to baptism, it would absolutely require that such a master should have all his slaves immediately baptised, or they could no longer remain under his roof. I do not see then how I can get quit of the difficulty in the way you propose.

Eug. Is there not then another way, in which it may be removed? thus: You allege that the argument from circumcision would require slaves to be baptised as well as children. But here it is

proper, in the first place, to settle the right of infants to the seal of God's covenant. Then, when we come to consider the case of slaves, we find this general rule respecting all adults, that a profession of faith is required on their part, before they receive the ordinance of baptism. As slaves come under this rule, it forms a sufficient reason for their exclusion without a personal profession of believing, though they were admitted to the seal of the covenant under the former dispensation.

Epen. This argument might do, if you had *decisive separate evidence* for the baptism of infants, from that contained in the inference from circumcision. I shall be very happy to talk over the other parts of the evidence afterwards. But I am at present going on the supposition, that the principal argument in favour of infant baptism is drawn from the Abrahamic covenant; and hence, that the reasoning on which you receive infants to baptism, requires you to receive the adult slaves of a Christian master likewise. If you cannot carry it its whole length, it is not tenable as an argument for infant baptism at all. I maintain, if your reasoning be just, it requires slaves as well as children to have the initiatory seal of the New dispensation. You must either apply it to them both, or not, *on this ground* at least, apply it to either of them. You reply: We shall first settle the case of children. But how? Is not this plainly begging the question? This is the very point in dispute. I

think you will see, that this mode of endeavouring to remove my difficulty must be quite unsatisfactory, unless the doctrine of infant baptism could be clearly derived from another quarter, and of course might be assumed in your reasoning; which is a supposition quite inadmissible.

A friend, who was so good as ^{to}suggest the observations that occurred to him on the difficulty I have stated, remarked, that as the duty of parents is the same now as it was formerly, they are therefore called to apply the seal of the New dispensation to their children. That the duty of masters to their slaves is the same too, in so far as the difference of the dispensations admits of it. They are called, therefore, to instruct their slaves, and to put them in a situation to be baptised; though, from the entirely spiritual nature of Christianity, they can go no farther.—But here one is led naturally to ask, if, from the spiritual nature of Christianity, men cannot give the seal to slaves as formerly, why does not this spiritual aspect of the new dispensation equally exclude the application of that seal to infants, who are quite incapable of spiritual obedience? If the spiritual nature of the new dispensation is a reason for withholding the seal in the one case, it is equally valid as a reason for withholding it in the other.

It has also been suggested, that as the covenant with Abraham was partly spiritual, and partly temporal, relating to the peculiar situation of the Jews as a people in the land of Canaan; we

are, on this account, not to expect every particular in that covenant to be applicable to our circumstances, though in certain great leading points the application may be very just. To this, I conceive, it may be fairly replied, that though the general remark may be sufficiently just, still the difficulty lies in applying it to the point in question. On what ground, I must still ask, can I suppose the regulations respecting the circumcision of children to refer to the spiritual aspect of the covenant, and those respecting the circumcision of slaves to regard only the temporal? They seem to me to stand much upon the same footing. If distinguishing, by the appointed seal, all the natural posterity of Abraham, nay of every proselyte, belongs to the spiritual part of the covenant; how can I suppose that, distinguishing all the slaves exactly in the same way, belongs to the temporal part of it? I can see no principle on which I can put the one into the one class, and the other into the other.

Eug. There is one consideration, however, which I think you have a good deal overlooked in your argument. You allege, that as circumcision was to be applied equally to the male children of Abraham and to his slaves; therefore they are to be viewed upon the same footing in regard to their right to baptism. But are there not, through the whole of Scripture, many precious promises to the seed of believers, which are not applicable to slaves? Does not God say, he "will be a God to Abraham's seed

in their generations," when no similar promise is made to his servants? In reference to New Testament times, it is thus written, Is. lix. 21. "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord. My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." In like manner, in Jerem. xxxii. 38. it is said, "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of *their children* after them." But I need not multiply examples of such passages; you know that many of them occur. From these and other expressions in Scripture, I think it is beyond dispute, that special blessings are promised to the seed of believers; and in this respect, they certainly stand on a different footing from slaves. I think, no such special promises will be found made to them. You do not, I hope, question that there are such promises made to the children of God's people.

Epen. I shall shortly state to you, Eugenio, all the length which I think Scripture authorises us to go upon this subject. I do not see that we can, with propriety, apply to every believer the promises that were made to Abraham, the father of the faithful. When God promised to him that he would be a God to his seed in their generations, the promise was plainly connected with the assur-

ance that he was to be the progenitor, not only of a numerous seed, but also of that seed in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. But this promise was peculiar to Abraham. In like manner he was informed by the divine declaration, that he should be "a father of many nations;" an expression which, in Rom. iv. 17. is directly applied to all believers. But no one will dispute, that the title of the father of all believers is quite inapplicable to any one but that eminent servant of God, who was appointed to be the progenitor of the peculiar people. So express, indeed, was the promise of God to Abraham, that he would be a God to his seed in their generations, that the Apostle Paul in Romans, chap. xi., proves the divine faithfulness to the promise that had been made to this patriarch, by shewing that the Lord had a number of true worshippers in that nation, even during the period of the greatest general departure from him; and amidst all the infidelity of the Jews, at the time the Apostle wrote, that there was then also a remnant, according to the election of grace. But can we for a moment suppose that any such promise is given to all believers; and that it is necessary, in order to vindicate the divine faithfulness, to be able to prove that each of them must have a succession of believers in their posterity in every succeeding age. We may take, for example, the seven churches of Asia. Would we not think it very strange to question, either the Christianity of

the members of these churches, or the faithfulness of God, though it should be found that in a few ages after the gospel flourished among them, there was not the vestige of true religion to be found among their descendants. On this account, I conceive, we are by no means justified in applying to the posterity of all believers, the promises which Abraham received in regard to his.

Eug. The force of the argument, from the promises made to the seed of believers, appears to lie here. To Abraham it was promised, that God would be a God to him and to his seed. The sign of circumcision was given as a token of this. This sign was to be given both to his seed, and to all the proselytes to the faith of Abraham. Must it not then be viewed as signifying the same thing to them as to Abraham, namely, that God would be a God to them and their seed. In confirmation of this, we have certain promises made to the seed of believers in every age. Now, though the sign is changed, we are called to administer the new sign in the same way as the old one.

Epen. This is no doubt, at first sight, a very plausible statement of the argument. But, if what I have already noticed be admitted to be just, I think it will very clearly follow, that the argument is fallacious.

If I mistake not, there are two fallacies in it. The first lies in supposing, as I have already suggested, that because circumcision was to be applied to proselytes to the faith of Abraham and their

seed, that it implied a promise that God would be a God to their seed, as certainly as it did to Abraham himself. Now, I have already noticed how this appears a false inference, from the consequences to which it would lead. It would require that all Christians should not only have among their immediate descendants, believers; but that these shall be found in their successive generations. Nay, would not your argument require, that all the slaves of the Jews, nay that all the proselytes to the Jewish religion, and all their slaves also, should have God as the God of their seed; because, the sign of circumcision was as really to be given to them, as to Abraham himself. If the application of the sign be viewed as implying the same thing to all who partook of it, this seems a plain and unavoidable consequence. But this is an inference, I conceive, none of us would be disposed to draw. We would not think of suspending the evidence of the divine faithfulness on the history of the families of all the proselytes or of their slaves, in the same way the Apostle does, on the history of the family of Abraham.

But there appears to me another fallacy in this reasoning, and that is, that we cannot admit the promise of blessings to the seed of believers, without its following, that baptism must be indiscriminately administered to them. I am most ready to acknowledge, that it is a great blessing for any one to be descended of Christian parents. This is manifest from his enjoying those means of

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religious instruction, which every Christian parent is bound to bestow upon his children. These cannot be too highly valued, and I am persuaded, the more Christians live under the influence of divine truth, the more assiduous will they be in instructing their offspring; and as the Lord works by means, if more diligence and perseverance were manifested in the discharge of this duty, we might reasonably look for a greater number of the children of Christians walking in the fear of God. But I cannot see what connexion this has with the administration of baptism to these children in infancy.

The advantage enjoyed by the children of believers is, in this respect, of the same sort with that which is possessed by those who are born in a country where the gospel is known; when compared with the situation of such as do not enjoy this privilege. But we do not reason in the same way here. We would think it very strange for any one to argue, that the mere enjoyment of this privilege (though none will deny it to be of the highest value), was a reason for admitting to baptism all who were favoured with it. We would say, in such a case it was our duty to wait, and first see who improved the advantages they enjoyed. Though being descended of Christian parents, then, is a valuable blessing, should we not apply the same reasoning in this case as in the other.

But perhaps you say, the promises to the seed of believers do not merely consist in their enjoying, more eminently than others, the means of

instruction. They contain an express assurance, that the Lord will raise up, of the posterity of his people, in every age, a seed to serve him. Now, admitting this view of these promises, you will not maintain that *all* the seed are included. I should in like manner then say, there are direct promises to all the families of the earth. Not indeed to every individual, but that some of all these families shall be blessed in Jesus. There is also a direct promise, that where the word of God comes, it shall not return to him void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereto he hath sent it. But amidst these direct promises, we only administer the seal of God's covenant, where we see the promise is fulfilled. If this be proper then, in the one case, where such promises exist; I do not see how their existence in another case, can be pleaded as a reason for acting in a different way in the other.

Besides, there is another consideration here deserves notice, and which tends still farther to confirm me in the supposition, that there is no connection between these promises to the seed of believers and infant baptism. It is this. Many of these promises alleged can only apply to children after they are themselves moral agents. Is not this the case with the two promises you have just quoted? Thus, in Isa. lix. 21., "My words shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed." This plainly refers to the seed after they are capable of having the words of Jehovah in their

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mouth. In like manner, in the passage from Ezekiel you have mentioned, it is said, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them." But it is not children in infancy that can receive good from the one heart and the one way that the Lord was to give them. Now admitting, in any sense you choose, that there is a distinct promise that God would bestow spiritual blessings on the seed of his people, as you do not argue that it includes *all* their children; it certainly by no means follows from this, that *all* descended of a Christian parent should, in a state of infancy, and before it can possibly be seen whether they are among the children who are to partake of these blessings, have that seal administered, which in other cases would imply the participation of them. We would here say, let Christians prize these promises; let them use the means of God's appointment. But as these promises, from their nature, imply that those to whom they refer are not infants, but moral agents, let us wait till we see who of these children are partakers of the thing promised; and then we may with propriety apply the seal connected with it.

Eug. I acknowledge I am strongly inclined to consider the promises to the seed of believers, as implying something more than that they shall have privileges superior to others; and with regard to your last remark, I do not see that there is any force in it, because it would equally apply to the promise given to Abraham. The

promise that God would be a God to Abraham's seed, as really refers to those who are moral agents as those you have mentioned; and yet the seal of this promise was to be given to infants eight days old.

Epen. What is meant by this promise, and to whom it is we are to consider it applied, are topics on which I should be happy to have your opinion; though they will come in perhaps as well afterwards. I would only observe in the mean time, it is plain from what you have just remarked, that you are not disposed to rest much on the promises given to the seed of believers as a separate argument for infant baptism, but to connect it with the one founded on circumcision. In this I think you are right. The former may be viewed as an appendage to the latter, but it is nothing else. If we take it separately, it will at once be seen not to lead to the inference which is usually drawn from it. But if you closely attend to this argument, from the promises made to the seed of believers, you will see that we secretly run back to the ordinance of circumcision, and place Christians in general on a footing with Abraham: in so far, at least, as to apply to their posterity, in their successive generations, the promises given to Abraham in regard to his. I have already stated what appears to me strong evidence against the validity of such an application of these promises, from Abraham's situation being in a great measure peculiar; and many things in it being totally inapplicable

to the general body of believers. But farther, you will remark, whenever you connect the argument in favour of infant baptism from the promises *in general* given to the seed of believers, with that derived from the ordinance of circumcision, your reasoning must be embarrassed with all the consequences that flow from applying the law of circumcision to baptism. These, I have already mentioned, consist in the manifest discrepancy between the rule respecting the application of circumcision and that regarding baptism, as seen in the case of the unbelieving wife; and in the inconsistency of supposing, that every slave of a Christian master must be baptised before he could remain under his master's roof. Till I see how such a striking discrepancy is done away, I cannot feel myself at liberty to regulate the application of the one institution by the laws of the other.

Besides, did it never occur to you, that there is at least the appearance of inconsistency in the conduct of pædo baptists, in reasoning so keenly from the Old Testament institution of circumcision in behalf of infant baptism, and not applying the same argument from inference to the relation that subsists between the passover and the Lord's supper. It appears clear to me, that in Scripture there is at least as close an analogy stated between these two latter institutions as between the two former. Thus, in 1 Cor. v. 7. when the apostle is speaking of the way in which the Christians at Corinth ought to have observed the

Lord's supper, he says, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump; as ye are unleavened, *for Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.* Therefore let us keep the feast (i. e. the Lord's supper), not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Now, suppose we compare this with the passage where the analogy is most strongly marked between circumcision and baptism. This occurs in Col. ii. 11. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by *the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism,* wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." If from the one of these passages then, it be argued that baptism came in the room of circumcision; the evidence is to me, I confess, fully as strong for asserting from the other, that the Lord's supper came in the room of the passover. And if I were asked, with what consistency I apply the laws of the Old Testament institution to the New, in the one case and not in the other, where the analogy in both cases is equally strong, I should be a good deal at a loss for an answer.

Eug. I suppose you mean by this, that consistency would here require us to admit infants to the Lord's table as well as to baptism. But to this, I think, there are several objections. In the first place, I am not sure at what age chil-

dren partook of the passover. I have often thought, that, from the description given of the manner in which the Israelites were, in the first instance at least, to partake of it, we cannot suppose very young children included. Thus, it is said, "Thus shall ye eat it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand : and ye shall eat it in haste, it is the Lord's passover."

Epen. I once thought too, that the objection might be obviated in this way ; but on a little closer inspection, I fear this method of removing it is not satisfactory. First, it is expressly said, the lamb was to be taken according to the number of the souls in a man's house. (Exod. xii. 3.) Again, in after times, when the males were to go up at the feast of the passover to Jerusalem ; it cannot, I think, be doubted that children went up at a much earlier period at least than we think of allowing them to partake of the Lord's supper. Besides, what is to me a conclusive proof that children at an early period partook of this feast, is, that there was no leavened bread allowed to remain in the house for a week. But the unleavened bread was a part of this feast as well as the pascal lamb. So much was this the case, that it is often called by way of distinction, the feast of unleavened bread. This part of the feast is particularly alluded to in the passage I quoted from 1 Cor. v. 64. Now, if there was no other kind of bread in the house for seven days, it is manifest that every child in the fami-

ly that ate bread, must have partaken of this festival. To this I may add, that, in the directions given to the Israelites respecting the instruction they should communicate to their children, in regard to the design of this ordinance, it seems plainly supposed, that, during the time of their participation of it, they were to inquire into its meaning. Thus it is said, *Exod. xii. 26.* "And it shall come to pass when your children shall say to you, what mean you by this service, that ye shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover." This is indeed fairly acknowledged by a very candid and able writer in favour of infant baptism. Thus, Mr Wardlaw, in his *Lectures on Rom. iv. 9—25. p. 15*, says, "the import of circumcision must have been a matter of after instruction to those who *received it in infancy, just as the import of the passover was.*" Now it certainly is at least very different from our practice, and would be thought a gross prostitution of the Lord's supper to administer it to children before they knew the design of the institution; and to make the very import of the symbols a matter of instruction, either during the time they were partaking of them or afterwards.

Eug. I do not know but we may err in this country in keeping children so long from partaking of the Lord's supper, especially after they have been instructed in early life, and seem to understand its import. But there is another consideration here. The impropriety of admitting children in infancy, or even at a very early pe

riod to this ordinance, seems to me clearly established, by its being expressly required that a man *examine himself*, before he can in a proper manner partake of it. On the other hand, if you do not observe infant baptism, and at the same time instruct children in early life in the knowledge of divine truth ; as you do not know how soon these children might believe the information respecting the gospel you impart to them, you might in this case have a character under your roof, which is surely never heard of in Scripture, an unbaptised believer.

Epen. Suppose I should say that when I read such an expression as this, " He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved ;" it conveys to me the idea, that faith is necessary to baptism. You would probably answer ; it is true this refers to adults who are capable of believing, but this does not exclude infants who are not so. Now, I appeal to yourself, if the same answer would not be equally applicable to the other case. If it is said, let a man examine himself ; may it not with equal propriety be alleged, this is only applicable to those who are capable of examining themselves, but does not exclude such as are incapable of this exercise. The one of these expressions appears as clearly to imply the necessity of believing to the proper participation of baptism, as the other does the necessity of self-examination to the proper observance of the Lord's supper. Let us, for a moment, suppose the form of expression in the one case quite simi-

lar to that in the other. That the words stood, for example, thus. "He that examineth himself, and partaketh of the Lord's supper, doth the will of God." I should conceive this mode of expression as really implied the necessity of self-examination, as the language which the Apostle employs. But this is precisely the form of expression used in regard to the connection between faith and baptism. I really do not see then, how our consistency can be defended; if we can dispense with faith in the one case, as we do in regard to infants, and cannot dispense with self-examination in their case in the other.

Your suggestion respecting the unscriptural situation of a child in a Christian family being a believer, and yet unbaptised, if I may venture a conjecture, you have got from Mr Walker of Dublin. At least, he brings forward this argument (if it may be so called) in favour of infant baptism, in his last publication on this subject. I must confess I have never seen that force in it which some others have perceived. If it be said, we know not how soon a child receiving instruction is capable of believing, and if not baptised in infancy, we must have in our family an unbaptised believer; I reply. We are just as incapable of knowing how soon a child is capable of self-examination; and therefore, if infant baptism is necessary to guard against the unscriptural situation of a child who may be a believer and yet unbaptised; infant communion will be equally necessary to guard against the equally unscriptural

situation of a believer, capable of self-examination, and yet, neglecting to commemorate the dying love of our Lord. It is true, from the influence of prejudice, we are apt to be less struck with the inconsistency of a person being a believer and not observing the Lord's supper, than with that of a believer being unbaptised. But the one is in reality not more inconsistent than the other. Both these institutions are equally the appointment of the Lord Jesus ; and faith in his name, equally requires obedience to all his commandments.

Eug. I should like to know how, upon your system, you would explain Rom. iv. 11., where circumcision is expressly called "the seal of the righteousness of faith." From this expression, I have always considered any attempt to explain away the spiritual nature of the Abrahamic covenant, or the spiritual aspect of this rite of circumcision, as completely nugatory. This, however, I find you do not deny. Now, without any dispute about the various classes to whom it was administered, whether adult Jews, proselytes, children, or slaves, we have this general truth, that what is expressly called a seal of spiritual blessings was to be given to infants eight days old. While this is so clearly stated, I have often been strongly impressed with the impropriety of Baptists talking of the *absurdity* of applying to infants a seal of spiritual blessings. I am not aware what view, according to your system, you will take of this passage.

Epen. I perfectly agree with you, Eugenio, in reprobating the strong language some have used in reference to this subject. I am persuaded that unguarded language, both on the one side and the other, has greatly contributed to retard the progress of patient and temperate inquiry. The question regarding infant baptism ought to be viewed merely as a question of *fact*. Our business is simply to ascertain whether Scripture teaches us, either by inference, or in any other way, that it is the will of God that Christians should baptise their infant children. If this can be discovered to be the will of God, it is not our business to speculate about it; but as a part of that revealed will, implicitly to obey. Could I clearly ascertain that this practice was taught in any way, I should not feel a moment's hesitation in complying with it. I trust, whatever view of this long controverted subject I may be ultimately led to adopt, you shall never hear from me those uncharitable insinuations, and harsh expressions, in which some on both sides of this question have been disposed to indulge. I long considered with you, the Apostle's account of circumcision in Rom. iv. as furnishing a strong argument in support of infant baptism. From a more close examination of the passage, however, I have been led to adopt a view of it, which, while it is very satisfactory so far as I have yet perceived, does not lead to such an inference as I formerly drew from it. I should be very happy to have your opinion of the sense in which I now un-

derstand it ; though I fear we could not discuss it on the present occasion, without encroaching too much on your time.

I have only one thing farther to remark at present, and this is, that I do not see how any view that can be taken of that passage can affect my general objection to the whole argument founded on the analogy between circumcision and baptism, viz. that the application of the rules respecting the former to the latter would carry us too far, would prove too much, and hence, that the argument from inference here, is not a sound one. Thus, take what view you choose of circumcision, it was equally to be applied to infants and slaves. If the argument from inference is to be adopted, baptism must be applied in the same way ; and, contrary to the express requisition of the New Testament, it would be impossible for an unbaptised person to remain in a Christian's family. But will you have the goodness to fix a time when you will be most disengaged, and when I could enjoy an opportunity of stating to you my view of Rom. iv. 11.

Eug. I think I shall be at leisure on Thursday evening next week, at six o'clock.

Epen. Most gladly will I wait upon you, God willing, at that hour. Goodnight.

CONVERSATION II.

Illustration of Rom. iv. 10...Remarks that have been suggested⁹ by others on this Illustration....Reply to these Remarks...How far a legitimate argument affecting the ordinance of Baptism, can at all be derived from the law of Circumcision.

Epen. I HOPE you are well to-night, Eugenio : you see I have been tolerably punctual to my appointment.

Eug. I am very happy to see you, my good friend, and to have an opportunity of pursuing a little farther our conversation upon the subject we were discussing last time we met. Though I have never been shaken in my belief of infant baptism, by the arguments commonly brought forward on that subject, I am very willing to examine any new view of the evidence that has occurred to you.

Epen. I hope you do not mistake me, in wishing to enjoy the benefit of your observations. I am far from supposing, that the view I now take of this subject is altogether new. I can only say, that the objections to the arguments in support of infant baptism, never before assumed the same formidable aspect in my mind they have done of late ; and I do not recollect having seen them presented in precisely the same light in

which they have appeared to me. I must repeat, however, what I formerly mentioned; if my objections rest on a false foundation, I am as desirous of discovering this as you can be. I think, before we last parted, you had just asked how, upon my principles, I would explain Rom. iv. 10., where circumcision is expressly called a seal of the righteousness of faith. May I ask, in return, how this passage appears to you to furnish an argument in favour of infant baptism?

Eug. I understand it thus. We here learn, on the highest authority, that circumcision was a seal of spiritual blessings; and hence of a covenant, the same in substance at least with the new covenant under which we live. As such, it was commanded to be given to the seed of Abraham when eight days old. It was also to be given to the seed of proselytes in infancy. If the covenant, then, under which we are placed is the same, though the seal be changed, we are called to give the new seal in the same way to the infant seed of all believers.

Epen. I see you have the same view of this text I used to entertain. This is still the argument from inference, to which I mentioned what appear to me very powerful objections in our last conversation. I shall be happy, however, to state to you the sense in which I have lately been led to understand the expression, when circumcision is called a seal of the righteousness of faith. In order to examine it more particularly myself, as well as to subject it to the investigation of

others, I some time ago put it upon paper, and in this form I shall give it you. As I have occasionally had an opportunity of hearing some objections to my statements and reasonings, I shall also notice these, with my answers to them, that you may have as comprehensive and connected a view of the subject as possible. As the argument from this passage is radically the same with that we talked over formerly, I find I must unavoidably introduce some of the remarks I made in our last conversation. This you will excuse. I shall not dwell upon them longer than the connection they have with the general illustration of the passage renders it necessary.

I call this paper an attempt to illustrate Rom. iv. 11, 12. "And he (Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also. And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised."

This is the New Testament account of circumcision. In the book of Genesis, (ch. xvii.) it is called a token of the covenant which God made with Abraham. The question then is, what view of this institution best accords with these two representations of it?

When circumcision is called *a seal*, the expression may be understood in two senses.

1. It may be considered as denoting, that it is a seal or confirmation to the individual who partakes of it, that he is personally interested in some blessings, either in the covenant with Abraham, so far as that related to external blessings, or in the righteousness of faith and the spiritual blessings connected with it ; or,

2. Circumcision may be viewed as an appointed seal or standing memorial of the fact, and a pledge given by the divine Institutor, that Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness ; and thus, an exhibition of the general doctrine, that whosoever hath the faith of Abraham, that faith shall be imputed to him in like manner. This last view does not suppose that circumcision, when called a seal, has any special reference to the state of the individual to whom it is applied ; but is a seal, symbol, or memorial of a general truth. The following reasons are suggested, for preferring the latter of these views to the former.

1. If circumcision be viewed as sealing something to the individual who was appointed to undergo it, it is extremely difficult to see what it was it sealed, or that it sealed any thing, to all those who were commanded to receive it. It must here be recollected, that it was expressly required to be administered to all the servants in Abraham's family, and to their infant seed. (Gen. xvii. 12.) " He that is eight days old shall be

circumcised, among you every man child in your generations: he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger which is not of thy seed." We also learn, that all the male children and slaves of any stranger who wished to eat the passover, were required to be circumcised before he could partake of it. (Exod. xii. 48.) "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land; for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof."

Now, it appears extremely difficult to attach any distinct meaning to circumcision, if it be considered as sealing something to the individual, or, in other words, as confirming an interest in some good, either temporal or spiritual, to every one appointed to be circumcised. If it be alleged chiefly to refer to temporal blessings, the slaves of proselytes had no interest in Canaan, nor even the posterity of Abraham for more than 400 years after circumcision was instituted. Should it be here asserted, though they had not Canaan in possession, they had it in right, in prospect, and in the appointment of God; we reply, that even this right to Canaan only belonged to one branch of Abraham's family, while circumcision was to be administered to all. To those who were subjected to it then, it did not, as individuals, seal temporal blessings. Again; no one will allege it sealed spiritual blessings to every one to whom

it was applied, as it was manifest, that many of those commanded to receive it, had no interest in such blessings. It does not appear, then, to be a fact, that circumcision sealed either the one class of blessings or the other to the individuals who were, by the Divine appointment, to submit to it. This is certainly a strong argument against the sense first mentioned, viz. that which supposes it had a reference, as a seal, to the individual circumcised, or confirmed some good to be personally enjoyed by him.

2. This argument is farther strengthened when we add, *that it does not appear, that, even when adults were called to receive circumcision, a profession of faith was in every case necessary to their partaking of it.* I formerly noticed, that not only all Abraham's slaves were commanded to be circumcised, but that every stranger, who wished to eat the passover, was bound to circumcise all his males, both children and slaves, before he could personally partake of that ordinance. The unreasonableness of supposing, that, in all such instances, these slaves must be considered as making a voluntary and intelligent profession of faith, such as we should now judge necessary in receiving a person to the participation of the ordinances of Christianity, I stated in our last conversation, and it is unnecessary to resume that point here.

There is, however, one consideration not formerly noticed, and which seems of considerable weight in this argument, and that is, that so peremptory was the command to circumcise all the

males of the family of every Jew, (*i. e.* his children, his slaves, and their children,) that it appears manifest, that when one uncircumcised was found in the family of a Jew, either the adult or the child was to be put to death. An attention to the following passages of Scripture will, I think, furnish satisfactory evidence of the truth of this position.

It is said, Gen. xvii. 14.—“The uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, *that soul shall be cut off from his people*, he hath broken my covenant.” The question then here is, what is the import of the expression *that soul shall be cut off*? The best way of ascertaining this, is by enquiring how it is used in other passages. Thus, Leviticus xxiv. 14. it is said, “Bring forth him that cursed without the camp, and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation *stone him*. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, whosoever curseth his God shall *bear his sin*.” Compare Numbers ix. 13. “But the man that is clean, and is not on a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be *cut off from his people*, because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season. That man *shall bear his sin*.” In the former passage, a man’s *bearing his sin* is synonymous with his *being stoned*. In the latter, it is synonymous with his being *cut off from his people*. Does not this shew, that cutting off denotes the punishment of death? In like manner,

Lev. xxii. 3. "Say unto them, whosoever he be of all your seed among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things which the children of Israel hallow unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul *shall be cut off from my presence*. I am the Lord." Compare verse 9: where the same subject is continued. "They shall therefore keep mine ordinances, lest they *bear sin for it, and die therefore*, if they profane it." If any should think that *being cut off from the presence of God* is somewhat different from a man *being cut off from his people*, the objection will be removed by comparing this passage with Lev. vii. 20. where this last expression is employed in the same connection in which the former is used in the passage just quoted. Again, Lev. xx. 2. "Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Moloch, he shall surely *be put to death*, the people of the land shall *stone him with stones*. And I will set my face against that man, and *will cut him off from among his people*, because he hath given of his seed to Moloch, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man when he giveth his seed to Moloch, and *kill him not*, then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and *will cut him off*." Also, in Exod. xxxi. 14. it is said, "Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you; every one that defileth it shall surely *be put to death*: for whosoever doth

any work thereon, that soul *shall be cut off from amongst his people.*"

On this point I only farther notice, that what is stated above quite corresponds with the incident recorded Exodus iv. 24. respecting Moses, "And it came to pass, by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and *sought to kill him.* Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet, and said, a bloody husband art thou to me."--- Without entering into any particular criticism on this passage, it is sufficient for my present purpose to remark, that it plainly intimates that Moses was in danger of being put to death, and that this was connected with his having neglected the circumcision of his son.

If farther confirmation of this truth were necessary, viz. that the expression being *cut off* here denotes nothing less than the punishment of death, it might be derived from the inconsistency involved in the only other interpretation which, so far as I know, has been attempted to be given to this phrase. Some have supposed it only means exclusion from the church of Israel. Now, it will be observed in the first place, that in so far as this refers to slaves, as it implied their dismissal from their master's family, it would be nearly of the same import with their deliverance from slavery, which, so far from being a punishment, would rather be viewed as a blessing. But, secondly, excommunication from the congregation can only be applicable to those who are *previously* connec-

ted with it, and interested in the privileges resulting from such a connection. But circumcision was the initiatory sign. Till a person, whether an infant or an adult, was circumcised, he was not a member of the congregation. He was therefore incapable, in this sense, of being *cut off*. A slave, for example, by refusing to submit to circumcision, might be *cut off* from the people with whom he was connected as his master's property, by being put to death; but he could not, in this case, be *cut off* from the congregation, in the sense of being excommunicated, because he could not be considered as joined with it in point of religious advantages, till his circumcision actually took place.

Most are apt to be startled when it is first suggested, that if any male belonging to the family of a Jew or proselyte was not circumcised, he was to be put to death. But, may not this arise from attaching some false view to the ordinance of circumcision; from imagining faith was necessary in every adult to whom it was administered; or that it contained a seal of spiritual blessings to the individual who was subjected to it? The idea of putting a person to death for not complying with a divine institution, is certainly very abhorrent to the genius of the New Testament dispensation. But we may here remark, that it is not more repugnant to the spirit of Christianity to suppose a person put to death for omitting circumcision, than to suppose one put to death for violating the Sabbath; and yet, that the latter was command-

ed, there is not the smallest room to doubt. The truth is, the two institutions stood upon the same footing; they both derived their authority from the divine command; both have the term *covenant* applied to them. Thus, Exod. xxxi. 16. "Wherefore, the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath, throughout their generations, for a perpetual *covenant*." Both, too, are called the *sign* or *token* of God's covenant. Exod. xxxi. 13. "The Sabbath is a *sign* betwixt me and you, throughout your generations." It is the same word, both in the Hebrew and Septuagint, which is here rendered *sign*, that is translated *token*, and applied to circumcision, Gen. xvii. There is then no difficulty in conceiving the punishment of death attached to the neglect of circumcision, which is not equally strong against supposing its being connected with the violation of the Sabbath. But whatever difficulties any may at first sight feel at the position, that every uncircumcised person was condemned to be put to death, the passages above quoted appear to contain incontrovertible evidence of its truth.

3. Another objection to our viewing circumcision as sealing something to the *individual* who received it, is derived from the circumcision of Ishmael, Gen. xvii. 21. Ishmael is, indeed, promised temporal blessings, that he should be fruitful, &c.; but it is expressly said, "My covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year."

Here, then, we are assured, that the covenant, of which circumcision was the token, was not to be made with Ishmael, but with Isaac; and yet Ishmael, as one of Abraham's family, is required to be circumcised. It could not be viewed then as sealing, or confirming, any thing to Ishmael as an individual, while he was, by express revelation, excluded from that very covenant of which it was the sign.

The above arguments seem strongly opposed to the first view of circumcision, viz. its sealing or confirming something to the individual who partook of it. It seems impossible to understand it in this sense, as a seal either of temporal or spiritual blessings.

Let us now enquire whether these difficulties are removed, if we understand the expression in the other sense that was mentioned, viz. *that in which circumcision is considered as a SEAL, a confirmation, or standing memorial of the fact, that Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness; and thus of the general doctrine, that whosoever hath the same faith, it shall be imputed to him in like manner.*

1. *The difficulties which, on the other interpretation, we found embarrass this subject, arising from the various classes to be circumcised, seem, according to this view of it, removed.* Circumcision was commanded to be administered to Abraham, to his seed, to his slaves, and to their seed; and we have already seen the difficulty of supposing it sealed any thing to the individual who partook

of it. Faith, on the part of the slaves, does not appear to have been necessary. What, therefore, could it seal to them? Not an interest in spiritual blessings; for these, when we speak of adults, are only received by faith: nor yet an interest in temporal ones; for they had no share of Canaan. Still farther, what could it seal to their children? Surely neither the one class of blessings nor the other. The same difficulty occurred in supposing it sealed any thing personally to Ishmael. But view the ordinance as a seal or memorial of the general truth, that Abraham believed God, and that his faith was counted to him for righteousness, and we shall find it was equally efficacious in securing its design, whether applied to children or slaves. Its being a seal of the righteousness of faith, in this way, depended on the fact of its being instituted for this purpose. In this respect it resembled the *rainbow*, which is called the *sign* or *token* (the word is the same in the original) of Noah's covenant. In itself, it is a natural appearance; but it became a sign of that covenant, merely from the divine appointment of it for that purpose. In like manner, when the origin of circumcision was known and recollected, whether the sign existed in the body of a child, or a slave, or an adult Jew, it was equally efficacious as a memorial that Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, had his faith imputed to him for righteousness. In the person of Ishmael it was a memorial of that truth, as well as in the person of Isaac. But,

2dly, Another confirmation of this view of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of faith is, *that it best accords with the Apostle's reasoning in this iv. chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.* It is the evident design of Paul in this passage, to establish the doctrine of justification by faith without works. This, he shews, was the doctrine of the Old Testament Scriptures, by referring to the cases of Abraham and David, v. 3. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now, to him that worketh is the reward reckoned not of grace but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

After quoting David's language on the same subject, in ver. 9. the Apostle thus proceeds, "Cometh this blessedness on the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say, that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised; that he might be (or rather *εἰς το εἶναι αὐτον*, *that he was to be*,) the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also; and the father of circumcision, (*i. e.* of the circumcised,) to them who are not of the circumcision only, (not merely

Jews,) but also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised." Here it is plainly the design of the Apostle to shew, that *faith was necessary*, both in Jew and Gentile, to justification; and also, (in opposition to the false notions of Judaizing teachers,) that it was *sufficient for justification* without circumcision. This is proved, by a reference to the history of Abraham, both before and after the institution of this ordinance. 1. He possessed this faith, and was justified by it, before he was circumcised. At that time he resembled a Gentile, or uncircumcised believer. He was thus the father of all such, though in the same state of uncircumcision. But, 2. For what purpose was circumcision given? Did it supersede the necessity of faith, or what relation did it bear to this doctrine of justification by faith? The relation it bore was this; it was a seal of this very doctrine; a standing memorial of the fact, that Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; and, at the same time, a confirmation to all believers, of the faithfulness of God to the grand principle of his covenant that righteousness should be imputed to them also. If circumcision, then, was appointed for this purpose, it reminded those who were circumcised, of the necessity of personal faith to justification. As Abraham's being a believer before he was circumcised, intimated his being the father of believing Gentiles; so the very design of circumcision tended to exhibit the necessity, in every case, of

the same faith which Abraham had, to justification; and thus intimated, that Abraham was to be the father, not of those who were merely circumcised, (as the carnal Jews were uniformly apt to suppose,) but of those, who, while circumcised, also walked in the steps of Abraham's faith, *i. e.* were believers. Thus, the great scope of the Apostle's reasoning is to show, that the two different stages of Abraham's history are both calculated to enforce the doctrine of righteousness coming by faith, whether men are Jews or Gentiles.

But, let us here see if the other view of circumcision, being a seal of the righteousness of faith, will tally with the design of Paul's argument. Suppose it to imply, that it confirmed the personal enjoyment of spiritual blessings to the receiver of the seal. The seal was mostly given to infants; to those incapable of exercising faith. If any inference could be drawn from this, it would be, that faith was not necessary to righteousness; because the greater number of those who received this seal had no faith, and were totally incapable of it. This interpretation, pursued to its legitimate consequences, instead of according with the Apostle's reasoning, would be quite opposed to it. Thus, if circumcision was a seal to the *individual who received it*, of an interest in spiritual blessings, then, as it was to be given to all the natural descendants of Abraham while incapable of faith, it would prove, that an interest in such blessings flowed from carnal descent rather than from a belief in the divine testimony. This was

the very error into which the unbelieving Jews fell, and which our Lord and his Apostles so uniformly oppose. It is what is peculiarly inconsistent with the design of the Apostle in this passage.

Thus, while the one of these views of the expression in question manifestly does not comport with the Apostle's reasoning here, it must be considered as a strong argument in favour of the other, that it completely corresponds with it, nay, powerfully enforces the conclusion which it is his design to draw.

Having thus seen how the second interpretation of this phrase corresponds with the Apostle's reasoning in Rom. iv.; let us next compare his account of circumcision in this passage, with the origin of the institution, as recorded Gen. xvii. If our view of this institution both corresponds with the account of its origin, and also with the Apostle's infallible commentary on its design, we shall be authorised to conclude we have given the proper interpretation of it.

In Gen. xvii. 11. circumcision is called "the token of the covenant which God made with Abraham." In Rom. iv. it is called "the seal of the righteousness of faith." Now, the true interpretation of these two passages must make them appear in perfect harmony. The question then is, how far is this the case, according to that view of the latter text we have adopted?

Here we remark, that the covenant was made with Abraham *in immediate connection with his faith.*

Though all spiritual blessings flow from divine grace, yet this is not inconsistent with the necessity of faith to the participation of them. Thus we know that the salvation revealed in the Gospel is entirely of grace, but this does not interfere with our believing the truth being necessary to our personal interest in this salvation. Now, the connection between Abraham's faith, and the covenant of God being established with him, is directly compared in Scripture, to the connection between our believing in him that raised up the Lord Jesus, and our partaking of the benefits that arise from doing so. Thus, Rom. iv. 13. "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith;" v. 18. "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.* Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, *but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*"

We have here, then, an important point established. Abraham's faith was as necessary to the covenant of God being established with him, as our faith is to righteousness being imputed to us.

This furnishes us with a key to the passage we are considering. It shews us how circumcision is with such propriety called in the one place "the seal of the righteousness of faith;" and in the other, "the token of God's covenant with Abraham." It was the token of a covenant made with Abraham as *a believer*, and essentially connected with that righteousness which was imputed to him by faith. Hence the recollection of this covenant brought along with it the recollection of that faith in connection with which it was formed. And whatever could be properly denominated *a token of a covenant founded on a righteousness imputed by faith*, might with equal propriety be termed *a seal or standing memorial of that righteousness of faith with which this covenant was connected*.

Here, however, let it be noticed, that our being enabled thus to trace the coincidence in point of import between these two expressions applied to circumcision, viz. "a token of God's covenant," and "a seal of the righteousness of faith," depends on our viewing circumcision, *not as sealing something to the individual partakers, but as sealing the general truth that faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness*. The reason is this; to understand circumcision in this connection, it must be viewed as prominently holding up the necessity of *faith*--as representing faith to be the medium through which righteousness is imputed. But this is not done, where it is viewed as sealing something to the individuals partaking of the seal; because the greatest part of these had no

faith which could thus be exhibited in it. If it must be viewed as sealing any thing to them as individuals, it would rather imply, that righteousness or spiritual blessings could be obtained by carnal descent; and that *faith* was not necessary, as in this case these blessings were sealed to those incapable of believing.

In opposition to the assertion, that circumcision, as administered to the natural posterity of Abraham, chiefly referred to temporal blessings, or to their possession of the land of Canaan, it has been said, and I think justly, that this rite is never represented as signifying one thing to Abraham, and another thing to his posterity. The Apostle's account of circumcision, Rom. iv. 11., has always appeared to me an irresistible objection to every interpretation of this institution which did not make the exhibition of spiritual blessings its prominent design. But that such an exhibition is its principal object, is fully maintained in that view of its import which I have endeavoured to establish. According to this interpretation, too, it may be fairly asserted, that circumcision signified the same thing as applied to Abraham, which it did to his posterity. In both cases it was a seal, exhibition, or memorial, of the way in which Abraham had righteousness imputed to him, viz. by *faith*; and a confirmation that all who had the *faith* of Abraham, should possess the same blessedness. But if it should be asserted, that it was a seal of something to the individual partaker of the rite, it never

can be maintained, that, in this sense, it sealed the same thing to the posterity of Abraham it sealed to himself. That he was a personal partaker of the righteousness by faith, no one can doubt. If any one should assert this with regard to the different classes to whom this seal was afterwards to be applied, he must make so many qualifications and exceptions as to show, that the interpretation which requires them is not tenable.

But let us next enquire how far this view of circumcision, as a seal or exhibition of the general truth, that Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness, accords with the circumstances in Abraham's history. Here we shall assume it as a principle universally acknowledged, that a voluntary obedience to a divine command is to be viewed as a test of faith in that being from whom the command came. On this principle, though Abraham's faith is not directly mentioned in the beginning of his history, it is manifestly implied in it. This accords with what was formerly noticed, that it was in connection with Abraham's faith that God established his covenant with him.

The first account, then, we have of this patriarch, is in Gen. xii. 1. "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, to a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless

thee, and curse him that curseth thee : and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Here the first thing addressed to Abraham is a *command* ; on a voluntary compliance with which, from the nature of the language, the bestowment of the subsequent blessings, or, in other words, the establishment of God's covenant with him, depends. Thus, could it be for a moment imagined, that Abraham had refused to obey the divine command in removing from his native country, it cannot be supposed the subsequent promises would have been given, or that their accomplishment could have taken place : one of them, his occupying the land of Canaan, could evidently never have been fulfilled. But what immediately follows ? ver. 4. " So Abraham departed as the Lord had spoken to him." Here is the first indication of Abraham's *faith*.

Again, ver. 7., When Abraham was in the plain of Moreh, " the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land. *And there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.*" By this action, also, faith is clearly expressed. The promise of God is repeated, chap. xiii. 14., and the same expression of faith accompanies this fresh declaration of it, ver. 18.

It is at the next communication that God made to Abraham, that his *faith* is directly mentioned. Chap. xv. 5. " And God brought Abraham forth, abroad, and said, look now toward heaven, and tell the stars if thou be able to number them ; and

he said unto him, so shall thy seed be. And *he believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness.*" This was not surely, then, the first exercise of Abraham's faith, though it is here first directly noticed. That which was formerly given as a promise, is called a covenant in the 18th verse of this chapter, apparently on account of the form in which covenants were made between men being employed by God on that occasion. "In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."

It was not till at least thirteen years after this that the ordinance was instituted, which Paul tells us was a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had previously. The intervention of this period is thus evident. The communication mentioned chap. xv. took place previous to Ishmael's birth, and he was thirteen years old when circumcision was instituted. In ch. xvii. the next divine appearance to the patriarch is recorded, where circumcision was appointed. In this passage, after Jehovah had given a fresh promise that he would establish his covenant with him, it is added, ver. 9, "And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee, every man child among you shall be circumcised." Abraham, then, is from the history expressly said to have

possessed that faith of which circumcision was the seal, many years before the seal was given. This shews, by the way, that though there may be some difference in the expressions, that the covenant mentioned chap. xv. and that chap. xvii. was in substance the same. Thus, God established his covenant with Abraham in connection with his faith; and, after a considerable period had elapsed, when God repeats that covenant, he appends to it circumcision as a seal, or public exhibition, of the righteousness which had been imputed to Abraham by faith, many years before. It was, thus, too, the token of God's covenant with Abraham, as it exhibited the channel through which that covenant was made with him, even his being accounted righteous by his faith.

If I adopt the other interpretation of "a seal of the righteousness of faith," by supposing that *circumcision sealed something to the individual who partook of it*, I am quite at a loss to perceive how I can apply this interpretation to the different classes appointed to be circumcised. To Abraham, indeed, as a believer, it sealed, or was a public exhibition and confirmation, of the fact that previously existed, viz. that his faith was counted to him for righteousness. It was, however, only a seal of something personal to him, from the circumstance of his being a believer; and thus, its being so to him, was the unavoidable result of its being a seal of the general truth, that faith, wherever it exists, is counted for righteousness to the person possessed of it. It

sealed spiritual blessings to him *personally*, because he was *an example* of that character with which God had connected such blessings; and of this connection circumcision was the public memorial. But if from Abraham I turn to his posterity, to his slaves, and to their offspring, and find it was to be applied to all of these who from sex were capable of receiving it, I feel myself involved in inexplicable difficulties in conceiving it as sealing any thing to the individual partaker. On the other hand, as applied to all these, it was equally efficacious as a public exhibition and confirmation, that faith was the channel through which the covenant of God was established with Abraham, and, of course, the channel through which righteousness was to be imputed to any of the children of men. Thus, the view we have suggested of circumcision, as containing not a seal of something personally possessed by the individual to whom it was applied, but a general exhibition that faith is the channel through which righteousness is imputed, seems the only one that accords with the history of the rite, and the variety of the classes to which it was to be administered.

Circumcision is called a token of that covenant in which God promised to be Abraham's God; but it is also called a seal of the righteousness of faith. From this it follows, that a man's having God as his God, and his having righteousness imputed to him, are nearly synonymous terms;

or rather, it is through righteousness being imputed to a man, that God is his God. Circumcision, then, was a seal of that righteousness by which God was Abraham's God, and which he had by faith; in other words, it was an exhibition of the way by which God became Abraham's God, viz. the righteousness of faith; and, at the same time, a pledge of God's faithfulness in fulfilling the promises of his covenant. The covenant, however, of which circumcision was the seal, contained a promise that God would be a God to Abraham's seed, as well as to himself. But, if circumcision was an exhibition of the channel through which Abraham personally was to have God as his God, we are certainly to consider it as expressing the same thing in regard to his posterity, viz. that it was only through faith they could enjoy the same blessing. Here, then, we have one precise view attached to this institution. It spoke the same language to Abraham, to his posterity, nay, to all to whom it was administered. But the justice of this explanation will be manifestly much confirmed, if we find the subsequent history of the descendants of Abraham correspond with it; in other words, if we find it was only through faith that they could enjoy the blessings of God's covenant in the same way with Abraham himself. We now shortly enquire how far this was the case.

We may here first, however, notice the striking display of the strength of Abraham's faith, which appeared in the subsequent part of his his-

tory when he offered Isaac on the altar, Gen. xxii. This produced a repetition of the covenant God had previously made with Abraham, when that which was formerly promised was ratified by an oath. We quote this particularly, that we may mark the connection we have already noticed between Abraham's faith, and, of course, the obedience which flowed from it, and the accomplishment of the promise God had given him. Thus, ver. 16. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, *for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that, in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Because thou hast obeyed my voice.*"

In the history of Abraham's posterity, we have a striking instance of the necessary connection between their faith, and the fulfilment of the promise of God to them, in the account given in the epistle to the Hebrews, why so many fell in the wilderness. Thus, Heb. iii. 9., it is expressly said, "So we see they could not enter in because of *unbelief*." Does not this plainly imply, that if those who fell in the wilderness had possessed the faith of Abraham, they would have been allowed to enter the promised land? But this part of the divine promise was not fulfilled to them, on account of the want of this faith. Again, after the Jewish nation was allowed

to occupy the promised land, their continuance in it, and its being to them a land of comfort and prosperity, according to the divine promise, was equally suspended on the continued exercise of that faith, or confidence in the divine declaration, in connection with which it had been promised to their fathers. Thus, in Deut. xxix. the displeasure of God is threatened against those who, after they got into the land of Canaan, should turn away from the Lord, (thus manifesting their unbelief,) and serve the gods of the nations. In ver. 24. Moses represents the surrounding nations, when they should see the calamities brought on the land of Canaan, as asking with astonishment, wherefore the Lord did so to that land? It is added, ver. 25, “ Then men shall say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. *For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given them. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book; and the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.*” But the difficulty lies not in finding, but in selecting passages which establish the connection between *faith in God*, as indicated by obedience, and the Jews continuing to enjoy the divine favour and protection in the land of Canaan. This is known and acknowledged-

ged by all who have the slightest acquaintance with the history of the peculiar people.

All the calamities that befel the Jews; all the instances in which God did not act towards them as a God, in protecting and blessing them, according to the covenant made with Abraham, arose from their *unbelief*, and that disobedience which was consequent upon it. They all originated in the want of that righteousness of faith which was closely connected with the covenant made with Abraham, which Abraham himself possessed, and which the seal of circumcision was designed to exhibit as equally necessary to his posterity, as the channel through which the blessings of the covenant were to be enjoyed by them. Agreeably to this observation, Jehovah is represented as saying, Hosea i. 9., to his ancient people, in the period of their public defection from him, “Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.”

Thus, *unbelief*, too, was the cause of the Babylonish captivity, and of all the calamities coincident with it; and we well know, that *unbelief* was the origin of the rejection of the Jews as a nation, when they filled up the measure of their iniquity, in crucifying the Lord of Glory. As it was from the want of that faith which Abraham had, that they were thus cut off from the blessings of God’s covenant, so it is by their again possessing it that they shall be restored to the enjoyment of these. Rom. xi. 20. 23. “Well, because of *unbelief*, they were broken off.—And they also,

if they bide not still in *unbelief*, shall be grafted in." Thus, the whole history of the Jewish nation most distinctly intimates the necessary connection between the posterity of Abraham possessing that *righteousness of faith*, which he possessed when God made his covenant with him, and their enjoying the blessings of that covenant. Does not this fact, which universally appears in the history of the nation, tend strongly to confirm the view we have given of the import of circumcision as a seal of *this righteousness of faith*, as intended to exhibit, in every age, the general truth, that the same faith which Abraham himself possessed, was necessary to the enjoyment of the blessings of that covenant which God had originally established with him?

If we descend to the New Testament history, we, in like manner, see the close connection that subsisted between the exercise of faith, on the part of Mary the mother of our Lord, and the high honour that was conferred upon her, in bringing Jesus into the world. When addressed by the Angel of the Lord, she said, Luke i. 30. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And when Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, addressed her, she particularly noticed her faith, saying, ver. 45., "Blessed is she that *believeth*, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." This is the more striking, when we contrast the faith of Mary with the *unbelief* that Zacharias had discovered

but a short time before, on account of which he was deprived of the use of speech for a season. This punishment is directly ascribed to unbelief: ver. 20. "Thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed; *because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.*" These incidents are precisely in the stile of the whole history of the Jewish nation; manifesting the same connection between the exercise of faith on the part of Abraham's posterity, and their enjoying the blessings of having God as their God, with that which subsisted between Abraham's personal faith, and God being his God.

In Hebrews xi. 16. we have the Apostle's commentary on the leading promise of the covenant made with Abraham; "Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he hath prepared for them a city." This is often quoted as an illustration of the promise given to the seed of Abraham, without noticing the kind of seed mentioned in the context. This passage confirms the view we have given of the only way in which God would be a God to Abraham's seed, viz. by faith. Thus, when God is said not to be ashamed to be called their God, to whom is the expression applied? Not to Abraham's seed at large, but to those who believed as Abraham did. They are thus described, ver. 13. "All these died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were

strangers and pilgrims upon earth. For they that do such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly. Wherefore, (considering that they are thus imitators of Abraham's faith,) God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he hath prepared for them a city." To quote this last passage and apply it to Abraham's posterity in general, is as inaccurate as to apply to men in general those promises that are peculiarly addressed in Scripture to Christians, overlooking the distinctive character to which such promises refer.

But it may seem unnecessary to dwell so long on this point. The connection between the enjoyment of the blessings God promised to his people, and that faith, in virtue of which they were to be possessed, is the uniform doctrine of sacred writ; and any assertion opposed to this, or that would imply, that these blessings are promised independent of faith, would involve the person who made it in inextricable perplexity.

From these considerations, then, I am led to conclude, that when God says he will be a God to Abraham's seed in their generations, the promise is to be understood as meaning, that he would be so to them, in the same way in which he was a God to Abraham himself, viz. by faith. And hence when circumcision is called a seal of the righteousness of faith, that it is not to be

viewed as sealing something to the individual partaking of it; but as containing an exhibition and confirmation of the fact, that it was by faith Abraham himself was justified, and thus of the grand doctrine of the revelation of mercy, that that righteousness which justifies in every age, cometh by believing.

But, admitting the truth of all that we have attempted to establish, it may be asked, what will it prove, or what effect will it have on the argument for infant baptism, drawn from the supposed analogy between this ordinance and circumcision? It appears to me to affect the argument thus.

It will be acknowledged, that, as the argument from circumcision in favour of infant baptism is drawn from analogy, the more closely we can trace that analogy, the argument will be the stronger: and, on the other hand, the more dissimilar the institutions are, the more numerous the points of discrepancy between the one and the other, the analogical argument becomes the weaker: nay, these points of discrepancy may be so numerous, as to destroy its force altogether. The question then is, if the view of circumcision above stated be just, does there not appear such a dissimilarity between it and baptism, as to shew the impropriety of arguing from the one to the other? The points of difference are these. Circumcision is expressly commanded to be applied to all the seed of Abraham, to all their slaves, and to all their seed. There is at least no such command given in re-

gard to baptism; and it is not contended that it ought to be thus observed.—It does not appear that even a profession of faith (certainly not one, at least, that was voluntary,) was necessary, in all the adults circumcised. In the case of adults baptised, the necessity of a voluntary profession is universally acknowledged.—The slave, or the child of an Israelite, or proselyte, that remained uncircumcised, was exposed to the punishment of death. This is not only not applicable to baptism, but a regulation totally discordant with the whole tenor of the New Testament dispensation, and with that spiritual worship it requires; nay, with the express regulation, that a believing husband and an unbelieving wife are now to continue in the same family connection.

Amidst so many points of difference, it may be asked, what are those in which they agree, and on which the argument from analogy has been founded? I reply, they are two: 1. Both institutions refer to spiritual blessings. 2. Both are initiatory rites; the one being applied to those who embraced Judaism, and the other to such as entered on the profession of the Christian faith. It will be observed, that this is perfectly consistent with what is above stated, that a profession of faith was not necessary to circumcision. This rite was to be applied to a proselyte who wished to eat the passover, and who thus professed faith in the God of Abraham; but it was not to be confined to those who made such a profession, for all his males were to be circumcised at the same

time. On these two points of resemblance has the whole argument for infant baptism, from the analogy between baptism and circumcision, been founded.

Here, then, perhaps, we may be able to trace the steps by which men have been led to practise infant baptism, or at least to defend it from circumcision; here we may discover where the fallacy in this whole reasoning lies. The essence of the argument may be brought within small bounds. It is involved in this question—Because, in comparing the accounts given in Scripture of circumcision and baptism, we find, that in certain points they resemble each other, are we authorised to conclude, that they do so on other points, though in the history of these institutions, no such resemblance is mentioned? The principles, I think, of strict reasoning and accurate induction, would require us to answer—We are not. Now, let us apply this to the subject in question. The mere silence of Scripture on this supposed resemblance, viz. that because infants were circumcised, therefore they should be baptized, would at least make it very unsafe to conclude, that any such resemblance was ever intended. But if, in addition to this, we see many points of discrepancy between circumcision and baptism, it becomes, in this case, doubly hazardous to attempt to trace a resemblance between them, farther than the simple language of the respective institutions will fairly authorise. Again, if we find that when we attempt to trace a re-

semblance beyond what we discern in the words of the institution, we are immediately involved in the points of discrepancy; that our reasoning will not bear us out; that we cannot maintain consistency; that we can only draw the one part of a conclusion, where, if our reasoning were good, it would equally support us in the other. When our reasoning thus plunges us in such embarrassments and inconsistencies, there is strong ground to apprehend something materially defective in the foundation on which it rests. The justice of this conclusion, it is manifest, turns on the success with which the existence of the points of discrepancy above stated between circumcision and baptism is established.*

* Lord Bacon, who, with such a penetrating eye, discerned the best mode of investigating truth, both physical and moral, as well as the various ways in which we are in danger of being betrayed into error, arranges these various kinds of error into which we are apt to fall, under four general heads. In his figurative language he calls these *idols*. He has 1. the idols of the race at large; 2. those of the individual; 3. those arising from the diversity of language; 4. those resulting from the speculations of philosophers. The 2d class he calls the idols of the den; referring to those peculiarities in the modes of thinking, which belong to each individual; which reside in the cavern of his own mind, and which he is apt to worship as so many tutelary divinities. Among these, he remarks, there are two predominating tendencies. The one is a tendency to catch too much at the resemblances among different objects; the other is that of dwelling too much upon their differences. It is in avoiding these two extremes, says he, that the spirit of truly philosophical enquiry, and the most effectual mode of ascertaining truth, consists.—These remarks of this profound philosopher are certainly applicable to the case before us. Men

There is one very plausible form in which the argument for infant baptism from circumcision is often stated. If you refuse baptism, say some, to the children of believers, you deprive them of a great privilege, which the seed of the godly enjoyed under the old dispensation, viz. having the seal of God's covenant applied to them. Now

have fallen into these two opposite extremes here: they have either been disposed too much to question any resemblance between circumcision and baptism, or they have pushed this resemblance too far. The truth must be ascertained by a careful examination of the two institutions. It is thus we are to discover in what points they resemble, and in what they differ.

Among the various ways of distinguishing truth from error, his Lordship mentions one, which is particularly valuable and decisive, where it can be obtained. This he calls *the experiment of the cross*. By this expression he refers to those posts that are erected in the form of a cross, where two roads meet, and which point out to the traveller, when otherwise he would be in a state of hesitation, which is the right one.

It is referred to the reader, if we have not an example of this in the case before us. Though I should be chargeable with repetition, permit me shortly to notice how this remark applies. The general question here is, Does the analogy between circumcision and baptism authorise us to suppose, that because infants were circumcised, therefore they ought to be baptised? Some say they ought; others, that they ought not. In order to ascertain this point, I take a view of the other subjects of circumcision, and find that baptism cannot be applied to them, without, not only violating the spirit of the Christian covenant, but also some of its most express regulations. I see, that if we are to learn who are the subjects of the one institution, by arguing from analogy from the subjects of the other, we ought to be able to apply this argument throughout. But as it cannot be thus applied, I infer, it is not in this way we are to learn who are to be the subjects of Christian baptism at all.

we are always taught, that under the new dispensation the privileges of God's people were to be enlarged; but instead of this, by denying infant baptism, they are diminished.

If the above statement of the import of circumcision be just, it is manifest, that this reasoning is quite fallacious. If the administration of circumcision did indeed imply, that those who received this seal were interested in the covenant, it would be true that it was a great privilege to be circumcised; and that if baptism were withheld either from the children of a believing parent, or from the slaves of a believing master, you abridged a privilege which both classes enjoyed under the former dispensation. But if this rite was merely intended as a seal, that those who believed should have their faith counted for righteousness; if it did not at all imply that the receiver was personally interested in the covenant, but was merely a public memorial of the way in which Abraham was justified, and that *faith* was essential to righteousness, it will not be viewed as so extensive a privilege. The difference between the old dispensation and the new, in this case, will be, that, instead of a mark put upon the bodies of believers, of their children, and of their slaves, being employed to exhibit this truth, "that faith is counted for righteousness," no such seal is now used for this purpose; but that the doctrine which was thus exhibited, is now distinctly taught in plain words, under the clearer light of the new dispensation. Without resort-

ing to infant baptism, the privileges of believers, instead of being abridged, are now enlarged, in proportion to the superior clearness with which the doctrine of justification by faith is taught in the New Testament, to the way in which it was exhibited by the sign of circumcision as a seal of that doctrine under the old. If this be a just view, then, of circumcision, infant baptism is not at all necessary to establish the very decided superiority of the privileges possessed by the New Testament believer, to those enjoyed by the Old.

It may seem odd to some, not to assign to circumcision, when it is called a seal of the righteousness of faith, the very first place in point of privilege that could be named. But we here do no more than Paul has done before us, when he supposes the question put, Rom. iii. 1. "What advantage hath the Jew, and what profit is there in circumcision?" He answers, "*Much every way; chiefly because to them are committed the oracles of God.*" This passage tends to confirm the view already given of circumcision. The oracles of God are a *means* to an *end*; and their end is attained when we have God as our God. But had circumcision implied that the individual circumcised had God as his God, it could not have been said, that the *chief* advantage of circumcision was having the oracles of God. This would have been preferring the *means* to the *end*. It could not have been the *chief* advantage of circumcision to have had the *means* of obtaining the righteous-

ness of faith, if it implied that the circumcised individual had *that righteousness itself* in connection with circumcision. But view this institution in the light above stated, and the propriety of Paul's language is obvious. If circumcision was an exhibition of the way in which righteousness is imputed, viz. by faith, then the chief advantage which the circumcised possessed, was having those oracles in which this way of justification is unfolded. This view, then, of circumcision, if upon examination found to be just, serves to remove many difficulties which press on this subject, if any other principle of explanation is adopted; and appears completely to withdraw any support which this institution might otherwise be supposed to yield to the practice of infant baptism.

Such are the contents of this paper on Rom. iv. 11. But to enable you the better to form an opinion of the view I have taken of this text, I shall mention any objections I have heard stated to these remarks, with what has occurred to me in reply.

First, The objection you formerly alleged has been repeatedly noticed, that a profession of faith in the true God, was implied in the submission of every adult to circumcision. If being *cut off*, it has been urged, means the punishment of death, this rather implies the existence of a profession in those who were circumcised. Thus, their being cut off was a punishment; this implies guilt; guilt, again, supposes instruction and evidence. Those punished were punished for dis-

obedience to a command, not to that of Abraham, but of God. But as this implied instruction and information, so submission implied a profession of faith.

This objection we talked over in our first conversation; and it is needless to repeat what was then stated. But what I think brings its validity to the test is, its having been established that being *cut off* implies the punishment of death. If this be admitted, which to me appears unquestionable, then the main force of the argument remains untouched. My argument runs thus; there is such a difference between the law regarding circumcision, and the state of things under the new dispensation, that we could not infer the way of applying baptism, from the way of administering circumcision. To prove this, I say adult slaves were to be circumcised, whether they made a profession or not. No, it is replied, but it was a profession, it must be admitted, they made at the risk of their lives. Does not this statement of the case, then, suit any argument as well as my own? Would not baptizing a person on a profession made at the risk of his life, be as inconsistent with the spirit of the New Testament, as baptizing him without a profession at all?

The Lord had reasons, founded in infinite wisdom, for instituting that state of things which subsisted under the old dispensation. But it is no impeachment of that wisdom to say, that it was extremely different from that appointed un-

der the new : and that if circumcision was to be administered on the pain of death if neglected, any profession, supposed in that case necessarily connected with it, must be something totally different from that voluntary and spiritual obedience required under the gospel. We are at once struck with this, when we hear of persons on the pain of death being required to observe baptism. What, for example, do you think of those baptisms we read of in church history, when some of the northern conquerors, after they had themselves professedly embraced Christianity, commanded all their followers, at the risk of their lives if they refused, to make the same profession. You revolt at it as grossly inconsistent with the spiritual nature of the religion of Jesus Christ. These conquerors often plainly acted, indeed, from motives purely political. But supposing them to have been real converts, we should be equally entitled to condemn them, if they required their followers to submit to baptism on such terms.

Be not offended at my illustration, and say, Do I put these characters on a level with the father of the faithful circumcising his slaves? I assert there is this point of resemblance. These slaves were to be circumcised also on the pain of death if they were refractory. But there is this difference. I venerate the conduct of Abraham, because he acted under express divine authority ; and because, doing so, I know there were wise reasons for what he did. But I reprobate the conduct of these conquerors, because

they acted in express opposition to the New Testament Scriptures, which admit of no force, and of no temporal punishments in matters of religion, but which require baptism (so far as regards adults at least, we will both admit,) not only to be preceded by teaching, but also by the voluntary profession on the part of those taught, that they embrace the doctrine in which they have been instructed. In the same way, I read with reverence the history of the Israelites, when, in obedience to the divine command, they expelled the Canaanites from their country; though I would be entitled to condemn, in the most unqualified manner, the conduct of any other nation, who, without such divine permission, pretended to copy their example. The ground on which I would contemplate with different sentiments a similar conduct in the one of these cases, is precisely the same with which I should do so in the other. In both cases divine authority sanctions that which without it could not with propriety have been done. Now I contend, though you might suppose some sort of profession before baptism exacted by the conquerors alluded to, there is no authority for administering baptism on the pain of death if there was a refusal to submit to it. But really, if the argument from circumcision be a valid one, I could not assert this. If the rule of circumcision is, by inference, to be applied to baptism, it would not only have authorised, but required them to have all their slaves, at least, baptized, at the risk of losing

their lives if they refused. Here, then, my old objection occurs. Why apply, by inference, one part of the law of circumcision to baptism, when it is manifest we cannot apply another?

Here I may remark, in passing, the strong bond of union that subsists between the argument for infant baptism from circumcision, and that employed to defend the infliction of penalties in matters of religion; in short, to arm the magistrate with civil power to inflict *condign punishment* on those who, in the articles of their faith, should appear refractory. The authority of the Old Testament injunctions is pleaded in both cases; and if the validity of the plea be admitted in the one, it will not be easy to shew, that it is not equally to be admitted in the other. In the law regarding circumcision, we have as striking an instance of corporal punishment, as in any other part of the Old Testament œconomy. This is the case, taking even the lowest view of the meaning of the phrase being cut off from one's people, by supposing it refers to exile. But still more so, if I have established, that it includes nothing less than the punishment of death.

Again, it has been urged, that supposing the expression *being cut off*, implies the punishment of death, this should not be considered as destroying all analogy between baptism and circumcision. This is not a discrepancy, it is said, in the *meaning or nature* of the rite, but an adventitious circumstance, viz. a difference in the mode of treating offenders under different dispensations, which

does not affect the analogy between the same or similar ordinances existing under both. The cutting off by death, under the one dispensation, corresponded with excommunication, under the other. The same punishment was annexed to breaking the Sabbath; yet, though no such punishment is now affixed to this sin, this does not destroy all analogy between the Sabbath, as observed in the patriarchal age, under the Jewish, and under the Christian dispensations. A similar remark may be made as to the passover and the Lord's supper. Thus the analogy between circumcision and baptism is not to be considered as affected by this adventitious difference in the way of treating offenders under the two dispensations.

To this I reply—I really do not know, according to this statement, what is to be called an adventitious circumstance, and what is essential to an ordinance. I consider the punishment attached to the violation of a law, as essential a part of the law, as the class of persons to whom that law applies. I can no more view the one of these as merely adventitious, than I can the other. Besides, it is not all analogy between circumcision and baptism that I question; but such analogy as authorises us to apply the one to infants, because the other was so applied. If, then, the mode of punishing the neglect of an institution is as closely connected with that institution, as the class of persons by whom it is to be observed, the impossibility of using the argument from ana-

logy in the one case, shews me the impropriety of attempting to employ it in the other.

The cases referred to, of the Sabbath and the passover, seem quite to favour my argument. We have the Sabbath existing in the patriarchal age; under the Jewish œconomy; and the first day of the week comes in the room of it, under the Christian dispensation. Now, how was it to be observed under these different periods? Not by inferring the way it was to be observed in one of them, from the directions given in regard to another; but by attending to the regulations which each period had peculiar to itself. Thus, there were regulations under the Jewish œconomy that did not obtain, so far as we know, under the patriarchal dispensation; but in this case, it would have been wrong to have gone back for our directions respecting the Sabbath to that dispensation, and not to have supposed that the way of observing it under the law, was to be learned from the regulations contained in the Mosaic œconomy. In like manner, we do not apply the regulations given under the law respecting the Sabbath, (such as not lighting a fire, and putting a man to death for breaking the Sabbath,) to the state of things under the gospel: but tho' there is a certain analogy here, it is from what is revealed under the gospel we learn how to observe the first day of the week.* According to

* Some may allege, that this mode of reasoning will tend to relax our obligations to observe the first day of the week, any farther than regards meeting for public worship. This, how-

the same rule, as I have already had occasion to notice, though there is the same analogy between the passover and the Lord's supper, it is not from the institution of the passover that we learn how the Lord's supper is to be observed, or who are to partake of it, but from the information which the New Testament itself contains on this subject. Now, if we thus argue in these other cases, why not do the same, though a similar analogy in some respects be allowed to subsist between circumcision and baptism?

ver, is not the case. I find the different precepts of the ten commandments quoted in the New Testament as of permanent obligation; I observe, therefore, a seventh part of my time as more immediately devoted to the service of God, because the command to do so is found among those precepts, part of which are thus quoted. There are, I conceive, solid grounds for changing the day; but our obligation thus to observe a seventh part of our time, I derive not from the institutions of the Levitical economy, but from its being a part of the ten commandments, as well as from the reason given for its being thus consecrated to God. If any one observe it as a part of the Levitical law, he must strictly adhere to the injunctions of that law; he must not light a fire, and he must judge that those ought to be put to death who violate the Sabbath. The difference between our obligations to observe a seventh part of our time, and those we are supposed to be under to apply the rule of circumcision to baptism, lies here: In the one case, we observe a part of a law, the other parts of which are quoted under the New Testament as of permanent obligation, and which is placed on a foundation which must be universally binding, viz. the Lord's resting the seventh day from his works; in the other, we apply to a New Testament institution the regulations of a law which is now abolished, and part of the regulations of which are palpably inconsistent with the spirit of the New Testament dispensation.

The next objection I have heard stated to my reasoning, proceeds thus:—I infer, in the preceding paper, from Exod. xii. that the circumcision of all the slaves of a proselyte was required, merely to enable the stranger, the head of the family himself, to eat the passover. But this, it is argued, seems quite unfounded from the general reason assigned for the command, viz. “For no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.” The stranger with all his household passed into a new religious community; and, on being circumcised, *all his adults*, as well as himself, were admitted to eat the passover. Compare Exod. xii. 48. 49, with 44.

But it has been farther objected, that when it is said, let all his males be circumcised, &c. no more can be intended, than that all should be circumcised that passed with the head of the family into the Jewish community. When Abraham was commanded to circumcise all his males, the meaning merely was, that *no uncircumcised person should be a member of his household*; and the circumstance of the same thing being necessary to admission into Abraham’s family, that was afterwards necessary for admission to the fellowship of the Israelitish church, seems to shew, that Abraham’s family was the household of faith, the church of God.

The following illustration has been farther stated, as expressing the meaning which some, who object to the foregoing reasoning, attach to the expression, let all his males be circumcised.

Suppose the government of any country to enact a law, that all foreigners desirous of settling in the country as subjects, should, in order to their enjoying the privileges of subjects, have a particular mark affixed in their forehead or right hand. Apply this enactment to the case of the head of a family having, let us say, *twenty* adults. Suppose four of these are unwilling to receive the necessary mark; would it be at all a rational interpretation of the law, that therefore he could not leave these four, and settle in the country with the remaining sixteen, who were willing to accompany him on the prescribed condition? The obligation arising from such a law would never be interpreted as amounting to "You must have the mark affixed to the body of every adult, as well as infant, now in your family. Nay, you cannot settle in it if even one of these refuses to submit to this mark, not even on the ground of that one being excluded from your family and left behind;" but rather as amounting to "No one who does not receive this mark must come with you, for none such can be admitted to the privileges of subjects." The application of this to circumcision is obvious. When all the members of a man's household are required to be circumcised, and the head of a family bringing his house thus along with him, passed into the communion of Israel; all that is implied appears to be, that all who passed with him into this communion, and became partakers with him of its privileges, must have this mark put upon them.

In reply to these objections, in the first place, I remark, that before the head of a family could himself eat the passover, it was evidently necessary that his males should be circumcised. Thus, Exod. xii. 48. "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let *him* come near and keep it." A man would have been living in direct violation of the divine command, had any of his household been uncircumcised; and none will say, that one living in such a state was entitled to eat the passover. It was as really a part of the divine command to the Jews, that all their household should be circumcised, as that they should be so themselves. It is on this I establish the necessity of every man's males being circumcised, as well as himself, before, agreeably to the divine institution, he could keep the passover.

In the supposed parallel case, of a person enjoying, on certain conditions, the privileges of a particular community, there is one very important point omitted; viz. that it was an essential part of the law, that if any one of a man's family did not receive the mark, he was to be *cut off*, i. e. to be put to death. The case alleged, supposes, that it was an optional thing in the members of the family to submit to the prescribed mark or not; and that if any of them did not, they might leave the family, while the head of it was not to blame. Now this is a case totally different from the institution of circumcision. Ac-

According to it, a man was deeply criminal, if he had not all his males circumcised. Such as were not so, were not authorised to separate from him, but were commanded to be put to death.

On the supposition suggested, there would be little probability of many of a man's slaves remaining with him. If a slave, by refusing to be circumcised, could have been turned out of his master's family, and allowed to enjoy his liberty, we have little reason to think, that many would have submitted to that rite. But, from what has been already stated, it was evidently not left to their option, as it was an express part of the law that the slave was either to be circumcised or put to death. I only farther remark here, that, even according to this supposed analogous case, no uncircumcised person could remain, at least, in the family of one circumcised. We must not forget, then, the acknowledged discrepancy between the law respecting circumcision in this particular, and that regarding baptism. An unbaptised person is not only allowed, but, in one case, expressly required, to remain in the family of one baptised; and this, of itself, shews, as I formerly noticed, the inaccuracy of reasoning from the one to the other.

Having stated these observations on the objections to the reasoning contained in the foregoing paper, permit me to add, that the validity of my argument does not depend on the particular view that may be taken of the nature of that obedience that was required under the law. You know well

the different opinions that have been entertained on this subject ; some contending that an external obedience to the requisitions of the law was all that was necessary ; while others maintain, that no obedience but what is strictly spiritual can be at all acceptable in the sight of God. This last view of the subject has been, in general, strongly supported by the Pædo-baptists; and it has usually been supposed by them, to form an essential part of their argument from circumcision in favour of infant baptism. It has been urged in order to shew, that if the same kind of obedience is required under the old dispensation as under the new, it is so far a reason for arguing from analogy from the one to the other ; and especially that, if this kind of obedience was required in the case of circumcision, there is no absurdity in supposing the same kind of obedience required in observing an institution that is applied to infants. Now this might be a sufficient answer to any argument which proceeded on the supposition of *the absurdity* of infant baptism. - But this, as I formerly stated, forms no part of mine. I argue, *first*, from the complete want of authority for this practice ; and, *secondly*, that if this authority be wanting, the mere consideration of the spiritual nature of the obedience under the law, (admitting this to be fully established,) will not alter the case, or make it proper for us to observe a New Testament institution in a way not enjoined by the institutor.

Take what view you please, then, of the obe-

dience required under the law. Let it be (for the sake of argument) as spiritual as you can wish it. Hold, as decidedly as you please, the unity of the church of God from the beginning, my reasoning will not be affected by it. You must, on any view of this subject, allow, that, under the new dispensation, new ordinances are appointed. Now all I contend for is, that whatever be the kind of obedience formerly required, or whatever unity subsists between the church under the old dispensation and that under the new, that these new ordinances be observed as they are instituted. This rule you strictly observe with regard to one of them, the Lord's supper. You do not allow the spiritual obedience required under the law, or the unity of the church to interfere in this case; why, then, allow these considerations to interfere in the case of baptism, which stands precisely on the same footing? It was this manifest partiality (as I have repeatedly observed) in this reasoning, admitting inference in one case and rejecting it in another, where, if the grounds of its admission were solid, the propriety of adopting it holds with equal force, which first led me to suspect the validity of this whole argument. Thus, after reviewing this subject again and again, no conclusion appears to me so satisfactory as this, that when a new institution in religion is appointed, we are to learn the way of observing it from the express directions respecting it given by the institutor.

Eug. I see you have examined this passage

with a good deal of attention. Any remarks that occurred to me on hearing your paper, have been anticipated, in a great measure, by the objections already stated. I shall, however, consider your arguments, and be happy to communicate to you any observations which, in the course of occasionally revolving them in my mind, may occur. One thing, I acknowledge, I was not aware of, that the expression that soul *shall be cut off from his people*, so clearly indicated the punishment of death, as your quotations (if, on farther examination, they are found correct) seem to establish. But, did it never strike you, that there is too much refinement in the whole of this argument; that this reasoning from inference requires too many and too nice distinctions, and is of too circuitous a nature to be intended for Christians at large. A matter that relates to practice, a point in which every individual, however simple or unlettered, however little qualified to follow a piece of reasoning from analogy, is called to act, we would naturally expect to be established in some more plain and direct way. It has often, on this account, appeared to me very questionable how far it was ever intended by the great Head of the church, that the subjects of a New Testament ordinance should be ascertained in this way.

Epen. I am happy to hear, my dear Eugenio, you are willing to examine the observations I have suggested on this passage, and on the general argument from circumcision. Some of my positions you may, perhaps, think questionable;

but even if you should, I hope you will distinguish between those that may be disputed without affecting the core of the argument, and such as do affect it. I am sure you are aware, that in all such cases, such a distinction is necessary, as you must have frequently observed, that in religious controversy, much stress is often laid on refuting a position which, though it were given up, the argument connected with it would, in all that is essential, remain untouched.

With your last remark, respecting the questionable nature of the whole argument from circumcision, as a medium through which we are to ascertain the way of observing Christian baptism, I entirely agree. But you are almost the only man who maintains infant baptism that I ever heard make this observation. Nor is this to be wondered at, as certainly the principal argument in favour of that practice is derived from the covenant made with Abraham. I think it must be conceded, that if there is any impropriety in resorting to so circuitous an argument as that from circumcision, in endeavouring to shew who are the subjects of Christian baptism, that impropriety lies at the door of Pædo-baptists. Take a baptist's account of this ordinance, and all is simple and direct. He refers you to the language of the commission, understood in its simple import, and illustrated by the practice of the Apostles. If he is ever led to resort to the argument founded on the analogy between circumcision and baptism, it is merely with a view

to meet the reasoning of his opponents, who retire to that part of the field of controversy. This may be illustrated by a case in point. It seems, at first sight, a very obvious principle, that a work which from its nature evidently exceeds the powers of man, performed in the name of God, or, in other words, a miracle, is a clear indication that he who performed it acted by a divine commission. Mr Hume, however, thinks fit to question the possibility of a miracle being the subject of testimony, so as to furnish an evidence of the truth of Christianity. Dr Campbell meets his sophistry with reasoning, not more acute than solid, but of a kind, perhaps, not level to every capacity. If, in this case, the charge of introducing nice distinctions and circuitous argumentation is preferred; against whom does it lie? Such distinctions and such reasoning, are not a part of Dr Campbell's system. There all is plain. They only become necessary, to refute the ingenious but sophistical objections of his opponent. It is Mr Hume, then, who is to blame, if Dr Campbell has had recourse, in support of his principles, to such reasoning as plain readers cannot easily follow. The application is obvious. If I have attended more particularly to the argument from circumcision in support of infant baptism, it is not because I entertain no doubts of the propriety of introducing an argument from this quarter upon such a subject, but because I conceive it is most satisfactory if it can be shewn, that, even admitting the propriety of the *kind* of reasoning,

the argument itself is not solid. To me, the objections above stated seem to establish this.

Eug. With regard to this last point, I do not mean too hastily to decide, till I have examined some of your positions more fully. But I think you too eagerly grasp at the conclusion, that there is no evidence for infant baptism from the New Testament itself. Though I always conceived the argument from circumcision as an important part of the evidence on this subject, I never viewed it as containing the whole of it. Many passages of the New Testament, if they do not directly contain this doctrine, are at least couched in such language, as strongly to imply it. Though the argument, then, from circumcision were considered null and void, I should not feel myself prepared to give up this practice.

Epen. I used to view several passages in this light too; but, upon a more minute examination, I have lately perceived objections to such an interpretation of them I never saw before. I should be happy to state them to you, though I fear I have already detained you too long to-night. Would you have any objections to meet again, and have another conversation on this subject?

Eug. None; and as I am to be in your neighbourhood on Thursday evening next week, I shall be happy to call upon you.

Epen. I shall (God willing) be at home at the time you mention; and, I trust, although we should be ultimately constrained to differ on the point in question, that no such difference will

ever interrupt that friendly intercourse that has hitherto subsisted between us. I have frequently observed, with deep regret, that alienation of affection which has too evidently been produced among Christians, by difference of sentiment in matters of confessedly inferior magnitude. This is not only a frequent source of sin in each party, but, I am persuaded, tends greatly to retard the progress of knowledge; as it is by a friendly interchange of sentiment, and candidly hearing what objections may occur to our principles or reasonings, that we are most likely to arrive at the truth.

Eug. I am very happy, my good friend, to see you are not yet infected with the malignant contagion of controversy. But beware of its influence;—very few who engage in controversial discussions altogether escape it. I hope you will long maintain the sentiments you have now expressed. I have somewhere met with a distinction between *enquiry* and *controversy*. I am happy to engage in the one, though I should tremble at the idea of getting into the vortex of the other. You will recollect, then, Thursday evening.

Epen. I shall most certainly keep it in view. Good-night.

CONVERSATION III.

*No example from Scripture on either side of this Controversy....
The language of the Apostolic commission....Whether proselyte
baptism existed among the Jews before the Christian era....
Dr Owen, Dr Lardner, and Dr Jennings's testimony on this
subject....An abstract of Dr Gill's dissertation respecting it....
Quotations from "the New Testament illustrated from the Tal-
mud by Meuschen"...from Lightfoot...and Ainsworth....On the
expression "disciple all nations."...Remarks on John i. 25.
...General observations on this part of the argument.*

Epen. I AM happy to find, my dear Eugenio, that nothing has prevented you from fulfilling your engagement.

Eug. I am as willing, I believe, to hear any thing that may have occurred to you, on this long disputed subject we were talking of the other evening, as you are to communicate it. I consider myself called to be always ready to give a reason for attending to any institution I observe. Though my reasons may be satisfactory to me, they may not be so to you; and in like manner, yours may not carry conviction to my mind. But even where I could not acquiesce in a man's particular sentiments, I have often found a hint casually dropped in conversation, suggest a train of useful reflections, which might never otherwise have occurred. I recollect at the con-

clusion of our last conversation, I was struck with your appearing to think it so plain that the New Testament accounts of baptism are quite inconsistent with the supposition that it ought to be administered to infants. I must say I cannot agree with you.

Epen. I know it has often been alleged, that though there is neither precept nor example for infant baptism, yet there are some expressions that strongly lean to that side of the question. I shall be happy to hear your opinion of these. But do you not admit that, at least, both the natural meaning of the commission itself, and the general account of the history of the institution as attended to by the Apostles, favours the idea of its being only applied to those who made a profession.

Eug. With regard to this point, I conceive we equally want example on either side of this question. Pædo-baptists do not object to the baptism of believers who never were baptised before, they only hold it proper, not only to baptise them, but also their infant seed. Now, there is certainly in Scripture no example of the child of a believer being baptised, on a profession of faith, whose father was a believer while the child was in infancy. Such a case would settle the dispute, and it is the only one that would be in point in opposition to infant baptism. I am sure, you have both discernment enough to perceive, and candour enough to allow this, Epenetus.

Epen. This I willingly admit. But, do not

you think that the natural import of the language of the institution is unfavourable to the supposition, that the institutor ever intended that infants should be the subjects of baptism.

Eug. I am not prepared to acknowledge this, if you take into account the state of things when the Lord Jesus gave the commission to the Apostles. It appears clear, that it was a common practice among the Jews to receive proselytes to the Jewish church, along with their children, by baptism. When our Lord, then, commanded the Apostles to go and baptise all nations, we are to recollect, that he spoke as a Jew, to his Apostles who were Jews, and, consequently, who could not fail to know the way in which baptism was practised among their countrymen. Knowing this, then, I think it is extremely natural to suppose, they would understand they were to practise baptism in the way it was known to be commonly observed; that is, not only by baptising adults on a profession of their faith, but also their offspring along with them.

Epen. This statement of the argument is, I acknowledge, very plausible; and I never saw how it could be answered till not many months ago, when, wishing fully to ascertain the existence of the fact here alleged in confirmation of infant baptism, I really found a great deficiency of evidence; I could not meet with any thing that would fairly bear me out.

Eug. I can hardly suppose, that there is not

satisfactory evidence of the existence of this practice among the Jews. I never, indeed, particularly enquired into it: but I have met with it so repeatedly and so confidently asserted, that I acknowledge I never supposed it could be questioned. I think you formerly mentioned, that you have seen Mr Walker of Dublin's last publication, in answer to Philo. You know he states the prevalence of this practice in the most decided manner; and, in the conclusion of his publication, he takes notice of the writer by whom he represents it to be most clearly established. But upon what ground do you question it?

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Dr Gill. Epen. I shall be very happy to lay before you, Eugenio, the result of my enquiry into this matter. What first shook my confidence in the existence of this practice, was finding it questioned, or rather expressly denied, by three eminent writers, two of whom were particularly distinguished by their acquaintance with Jewish literature, and the other not less so for his accurate knowledge of the writings of the early Christian fathers. These writers are Dr Gill, Dr Owen, and Dr Lardner. The first, indeed, being himself a baptist, may be suspected to be partial on such a subject; though I can hardly conceive any partiality for a particular opinion could lead a man of good sense to deny that there existed satisfactory historical evidence in support of a fact, if he knew that any one who took the trouble to enquire into the real state of the case could contradict him. Now the Doctor has expressly written a dissertation on this

subject, in which he endeavours, and, I think, with much success, to prove, that no such practice as that of receiving proselytes among the Jews by baptism, can be shewn to have existed before the third or fourth centuries of the Christian era. Dr Owen, who seems so much at home in quoting the Talmudical writings, expresses himself much to the same effect. I took a note of his words. They are these: "From this latter, temporary, occasional institution, (referring to the Israelites washing their clothes when they were before Mount Sinai,) such as they had many granted to them whilst they were in the wilderness, before the giving of the law, the Rabbins have formed a baptism for those that enter into their synagogue; a fancy, too, greedily embraced by some Christian writers, who would have the holy ordinance of the church's baptism to be derived from thence. But this washing of their clothes, not of their bodies, was temporary, never repeated; neither is there any thing of any such baptism or washing required in any proselytes, either men or women, where the laws of their admission are strictly set down. Nor are there the least footsteps of any such usage among the Jews until after the days of John the Baptist, in imitation of whom it was first taken up by some Antimishnical Rabbins." Owen on Heb. vol. 1. Exercit. 19. p. 272. The same thing he asserts, in his Theologum, l. 5. Digress. 1. p. 447. "The institution of the rite of baptism is no where mentioned in the Old Testament; no example is extant, nor, during the

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Read! Jewish church, was it ever used in the admission of proselytes; no mention of it is to be met with in Philo, Josephus, nor in Jesus the son of Sirack, nor in the evangelic history."

Lardner The opinion, on this point, entertained by Dr Lardner, the very learned author of the Credibility, &c. I met with in a volume of letters to and from the late Dr Philip Doddridge. "As for the baptism of proselytes, (says Dr L.) I take it to be a mere fiction of the Rabbins, by whom we have suffered ourselves too often to be imposed upon." p. 275. I might have added another authority to those I have quoted, and one not more disposed to object to infant baptism than the two writers last mentioned; I mean Dr Jennings, the author of the Dissertations on the Jewish Antiquities, the course of whose studies would naturally have led him to discover any thing that was to be met with in favour of the antiquity of proselyte baptism. His words are—
Jennings "It remains to be proved, not only that Christian baptism was instituted in the room of proselyte baptism, but that the Jews had any such baptism in our Saviour's time. The earliest accounts we have of it are in the Mishnah and Gemara."* And again, he says, "There wants
Jesus
Christ

* As, in the following discussion, there is occasion frequently to refer to different Jewish writings, as the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Gemara, it may be useful to mention, for the sake of those not acquainted with these names, the history and origin of the different kinds of writings that are thus distinguished.—After the Babylonish captivity, when the Jews returned to their own land, Ezra was employed to arrange afresh the ob-

more evidence of its being as ancient as our Saviour's time, than I apprehend can be produced,

servances of the Jewish church. Those usages which existed previous to the captivity, and which, though not particularly mentioned in Scripture, were considered as ancient and approved, now began to form what the Jews call their oral law. From this period, they speak of a two-fold law, viz. that contained in the Scriptures, and that handed down by the tradition of the elders. This last was soon considered, not only as paramount with the former, but as possessing even higher authority. It is in reference to this, that our Lord said, "Ye make the word of God of none effect by your traditions." Mark vii. 13. Indeed, there is a very striking resemblance between the way in which the Old Testament Scriptures are overlooked by the Jews in latter times, and the way in which those of the New Testament have been treated by the abettors of the church of Rome. These, in like manner, conceive the traditions of the church as necessary to explain the import of the written word; and in this way the meaning of Scripture can be most conveniently accommodated to the designs of the expositors.

The Jewish writers give the following account of the origin and history of their oral law. When Moses, say they, received the law from God on Mount Sinai, besides that part of it which he was commanded to commit to writing, he received the interpretation of it directly from the mouth of God. This was commanded not to be written, but to be transmitted by tradition, from generation to generation. This oral law, they farther suppose, was repeated by Moses before his death to Joshua; by him it was delivered to the elders; and, after passing through a number of hands, among whom are mentioned Simeon, who took our Lord in his arms, and Gamaliel, at whose feet Paul was educated, one Rabbi Judah Hakkadosh wrote it in a book which they call the *Mishnah*.

Such is the fanciful account given by the Talmudical writers, for which there is no foundation in history, either sacred or profane.

The true account of this matter, so far as it can be collected, seems to be the following:---Certain traditions appear to have

to ground an argument upon it in relation to Christian baptism." These concessions of such

been received and handed down from the days of Ezra. After the death of Simon the Just, there arose a class of men called Tannaim, or Mishnical Doctors, who drew inferences from these traditions, which they introduced among the traditions themselves, and held to be of equal authority. These inferences were, like the traditions from which they were drawn, transmitted, not in writing, but orally. At last they became so numerous, that about the middle of the second century of the Christian era, it was found necessary to put the whole in writing. This was done by the above mentioned Rabbi Judah, who compiled them in six books, digesting and arranging them under different heads, and this compilation is called the *Mishnah*. As this work was highly esteemed by the Jews, as soon as it was published it became the study of their learned men both in Judea and Babylon, who wrote commentaries upon it. These commentaries, together with the Mishnah as the text, go by the name of the *Talmuds*, and are distinguished into the Babylonish and the Jerusalem Talmuds. When these commentaries are taken separately, they are denominated the *Gemara*, or the *complement*, the *filling up*, as they are supposed to supply what is wanting in the Mishnah. Thus the *Mishnah* is the text; the *Gemara* the commentary; and both together receive the name of the *Talmud*. The commentary on the Mishnah given by the Jews of Judea, along with the Mishnah as the text, is called the *Jerusalem Talmud*; and that by the Jews of Babylon, the *Babylonish Talmud*. The former was completed about the end of the third century, the latter about the beginning of the sixth. The Babylonish Talmud is that which is chiefly followed by the modern Jews. This forms the chief subject of the studies of their learned men, as comprehending, in their opinion, the whole doctrines and rites of their religion. Indeed, the name *Gemara* is exclusively employed to denote this commentary on the Babylonish Talmud.

Of this Talmud, Maimonides, a learned Jew of the 12th century, made an abstract, giving simply the decisions on the various cases stated in it, and omitting the discussions connec-

distinguished Pædo-baptists, I confess, staggered me not a little on this point. Did you ever meet with Dr Gill's dissertation on this subject?

Eug. I never did ; I have heard it is now very scarce.

Epen. I believe it is so. I got a reading of it from a friend ; and, as it is not to be met with every day, I took an abstract of his reasonings, which, if you have no objections, I shall read to you.

ted with them. This, in point of perspicuity and arrangement, is esteemed one of the most complete digests of law ever made. Those who professed to be particularly learned in the oral or traditionary law, have received different names at the different periods of the Jewish history. Previous to the publishing of the Mishnah, they were called *Tannaim*, a word derived from one that signifies to deliver by tradition. It was out of the traditions of the *Tannaim*, or Mishnical Doctors, the Mishnah was composed. And after the publication of the Mishnah till the time of the Babylonish Talmud, they went by the name of *Amoraim*, i. e. Dictators, from their dictating the explanations of the Mishnah contained in the Gemara. The Amoraim are the same with the Gemarical Doctors, out of whose commentaries on the Mishnah the Gemara was composed. For about one hundred years after the publishing of the Talmud, their learned men went by the name of *Seburaim*, or *opinionists*, because they did not then dictate any thing themselves, but drew their opinions, by argument and inference, from what was already contained in the Mishnah and Gemara. After this, they received the name of *Geonim*, denoting the Sublime or Excellent Doctors. But for many centuries, those who excelled in this traditionary learning have only received the title of *Rabbi*, except those who ministered in the synagogues, who were accustomed to receive the appellation of *Chacams*, or Wise Men.

For farther particulars on this subject, see *Prid. Conn.* vol. I. p. 324.

Eug. I shall be very happy to hear it.

Epen. The Doctor divides his dissertation into five chapters. The first treats of the various sorts of proselytes among the Jews. In this there is nothing particularly relating to the subject of baptism; only he concludes with observing, that it is the proselytes denominated Proselytes of Righteousness, who are said to have been received into the Jewish church by baptism. The males by circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice; and the females by baptism and sacrifice.

In the second chapter he notices the occasion of this dissertation. He writes it, he informs us, on account of several learned men-asserting, that this practice of receiving proselytes with their infants into the Jewish church by baptism, prevailed among the Jews before the time of our Saviour and John the Baptist, and their giving this as a reason why the Scriptures are so silent on the subject of infant baptism. Christian baptism they conceive founded on a practice that already prevailed, and hence it was unnecessary to specify particularly who were the subjects of it. Here he quotes Broughton, Ainsworth, Selden, Hammond, and Lightfoot. These, he shews, quote the Talmudical writers in support of this practice; and the two last, Hammond and Lightfoot, lay peculiar stress on it as an argument for infant baptism. Hammond says, "The foundation of the baptism of Christian infants is far more fitly laid in this practice than in circumcision;" and "that it is the true basis of infant baptism."--

The Reasoning of Dr. Lill on the Proselyte Baptism.

Error

From these authorities, he observes, Dr Wall has taken his dissertation on Jewish baptism, as he acknowledges he was not so well acquainted with the books to be searched for such quotations; and from such authorities it is now common for every writer on the subject of infant baptism to take for granted the existence of such a practice.

The third chapter is entitled, "The proof of the baptism of Jewish proselytes enquired into; whether there is any proof of it before, at, or quickly after, the times of John and Christ."—Here, 1. it is remarked, that nothing of this kind appears in the writings of the Old Testament which chiefly concern the Jewish nation. Dr Lightfoot, indeed, asserts, that Jacob admitted the proselytes of Schechem by baptism, but gives no proof of it; and the Babylonian Talmud, reciting Exod. ii. 5. says, "the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself from the idols of her father's house." But this is a gloss of Jarchi, a writer of the twelfth century. Nothing, however, is more plain, than that there was an express law for the admission of proselytes to the privileges of the Jewish religion, and this was by the circumcision of the proselyte and of all his males. Nor does it ever appear that any other mode of admission was used. There was one law for the stranger or proselyte, and for the home-born Israelite, Exod. xii. 48, 49. Proselytes are mentioned in the times of Hezekiah; 2 Chron. xxx. 25., but no intimation of their baptism. Particular rites were to be observed in

Enquiring into the proof of Baptism of Jewish Proselytes.

the case of the marriage of an Israelite to a captive woman taken in war, Deut. xxi. 10., but nothing is said of her baptism. Neither is any hint of this kind given in regard to those who separated themselves from the heathen, and came with the Jews out of Babylon, Ezra vi. 21.--2. In the Apocryphal books, supposed to be written between the time the Old Testament Scriptures were finished, and the commencement of the New Testament dispensation, we find no mention made of any such custom, though they sometimes speak of proselytes being made to the Jewish religion. Thus, when Judith cut off the head of Olofernes, it is said, "Achior the Ammonite, seeing all that the God of Israel did, strongly believed in God, and circumcised the flesh of his foreskin, and was added to the house of Israel unto this day."--3. Mention is made of proselytes in the New Testament, Matt. xxiii. 15., Acts ii. 10., vi. 5., and xiii. 43.; but nothing said concerning their admission, or the manner of it.--4. As there are no traces of this custom in the Jewish writings before or about the times of John, Christ, and his Apostles, so neither are there any in those which were written within a short time after. Thus Philo the Jew lived in the first century at Alexandria, where it is more probable there would be proselytes than in Judea, and though he mentions proselytes as they were admitted by Moses, he is quite silent about their baptism. Neither is there any hint of this custom in the Rabbinical books,

said by the Jews to be written a little before or after this period, as the books of Bahir, Zohar, the Targums of Onkelos on the Pentateuch, and of Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Prophets.---5. Josephus, who lived a little after Philo, speaks of many Gentiles, nay, of whole nations, coming over to Judaism; and speaks of their being circumcised, but nothing of their baptism. He particularly mentions Helena, Queen of Adiabene, but says nothing of her baptism, though he speaks of Izates, her son, being circumcised.---6. This custom is not mentioned in the Targums, or Chaldee paraphrases. It has been already noticed, it is not found in those of Jonathan Ben Uzziel and Onkelos, which are the most ancient, the one being written about the beginning of the first century, and the other about the end of it. The rest are of uncertain dates, and uncertain authors. In one, indeed, the Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan on Exod. xii. 44., it is said, "And every stranger who is sold for a servant to an Israelite, bought with money, then thou shalt circumcise him, and thou shalt *dip* him, and so shall he eat the passover." But in this Targum, not only is mention made of the Mishnah, but it abounds with Talmudic fables and traditions; and hence it must have been written after both the Mishnah and Talmud, and, of course, can have no higher authority than they possess.---7. No mention is made of this custom in the Mishnah, or book of Jewish traditions. This is a collection of all the traditions among the Jews, which had been hand-

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ed down from age to age, and were collected into a book by R. Judah Hakkadosh, in the middle of the second century, or, according to others, about the beginning of the third. Dr Wall, indeed, transcribing from Selden, says an allusion to this practice is found, not only in the Gemara, but in the text of the Mishnah itself, which, as he suggests, speaks of a child becoming a proselyte by baptism. But the passage referred to says no such thing. It runs thus: "A she stranger, a captive, and a maiden, who are redeemed, and become proselytes, and are made free, being *under* (or as in the following section, *above*) three years and one day old, are allowed the matrimonial dowry." *i. e.* when they come to age and are married. Another passage from the Mishnah speaks of dipping in the case of uncleanness, but has no reference to proselyte baptism. Neither do I find this practice mentioned in the *Rabbot*, or commentaries on the Pentateuch, and the five Megillot, and which were written about A. D. 300. 8. This custom is not mentioned by any of the Christian fathers of the first three or four centuries. Barnabas, who was a Jew, in his Epistle, still extant, treats chiefly of Jewish rites, and of their being typical of evangelical things, and yet says nothing of this custom. Nay, he directly sets himself to find out what was before said of the ordinance of baptism. "Let us enquire," says he, "whether the Lord has taken any care to make manifest beforehand any thing concerning water," (that is, concerning baptism,) and then

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Mishnah

No support from
Christian Fathers
Particulars!

he adds, "Concerning the water, it is written to Israel, how the baptism that leads to the remission of sins, they would not; but appointed for themselves," referring to their own superstitious worship, against which our Lord inveighs. In like manner, Trypho, the Jew, in his dispute with Justin Martyr, when the latter asked what was necessary, answers, "to keep the Sabbath—to be circumcised—to be baptised, whoever touches those things forbidden by Moses;" plainly referring to the purification to be observed after uncleanness, but not a syllable about proselyte baptism.

In the fourth chapter of this dissertation, the Doctor proceeds to shew, that the only proof alleged in support of this custom, is derived from the Talmud and Talmudical writers. There are two Talmuds, the one called the Jerusalem, and the other the Babylonian Talmud. The former was written for the use of the Jews in Judea, after the destruction of the temple; and the other for those at Babylon and the adjacent countries. The former is supposed to be finished A. D. 230. (Some make it later.) Here are two or three passages that speak of proselytes being dipped. The only case mentioned of an infant, is where a saying of R. Hezekiah is quoted to this effect, "A man finds an infant cast out, (*i. e.* exposed,) and he dips it in the name of a servant," or for servitude. But even this is different from proselyte baptism; and yet this is the only clause

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 produced by Dr Lightfoot out of this Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud is usually supposed to have been finished about A. D. 500. In this Talmud we find the following commentary on Numb xv. 15. "As ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord." "As your fathers entered not into covenant but by circumcision, and dipping, and acceptance of blood, or sacrifice: so they (the proselytes) enter not into covenant but by circumcision, and dipping, and through acceptance of blood," *i. e.* by sacrifice. Other passages contain a similar allusion to the baptism of proselytes, and particular regulations regarding the quantity of water in some cases necessary; together with the mode to be observed where women are baptised. "There is but one instance I have met with," says the Doctor, "in this Talmud, of the dipping of a child, or a minor made a proselyte; and a male is so called till he is thirteen years and one day. Of such an one it is said, 'A proselyte, a little one, (a minor,) they dip him, by the decree of the Sanhedrim.' That is, according to the gloss, one that has no father, and his mother brings him to the Sanhedrim to be made a proselyte, and there are three at his dipping, and they are a father to him, and by their means he is made a proselyte. And in the same place it is observed, of a stranger whose sons and daughters are made proselytes with him, and acquiesce in what their father has done, when they grow up they may make it void."

Such is the evidence from the Talmuds. Mai-

monides, who lived in the twelfth century, was an industrious and judicious compiler out of the Talmud; but he cannot be thought of higher authority than the writings from which he has derived his information. Later writers, again, derive their information from him.

The Talmudical writers pretend, indeed, to found the practice of proselyte baptism on Scripture authority. Thus, it is asked, "From whence is it? (or a proof of it.) From what is written Exod. xix. 10., where there is an obligation to wash clothes, there is an obligation to dip." Again, they infer it from Moses sprinkling the blood upon the people, for they add, "there is no sprinkling without dipping," as strange an inference as that dipping should be understood to be implied in washing of clothes. I formerly mentioned a quotation from Dr Owen, which Dr Gill here introduces, shewing the impression the former had of the absurdity of the Rabbin's attempting to graft the practice of proselyte baptism on such a passage of Scripture as this in Exod. Dr Lightfoot carries this custom even higher than the Jews themselves, as he supposes Jacob chose into his family some of the Shechemites, and other heathens, when going to worship at Bethel; but for this supposition, no authority is quoted. It is singular, however, that this learned man afterwards expressed his doubt respecting the origin of this kind of baptism. "We acknowledge," says he, "that circumcision was of divine institution; but by whom baptism, that was inseparable from

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 it, was instituted, is doubtful." Another learned writer, Rhenford, carries the custom still higher, and supposes that Jacob took it from Adam, who, he imagines, at the solemn making of the covenant with him, was washed with water, before he put on the garments God gave him. This is stretching conjecture with a witness, and needs no commentary. While this custom, then, has the Talmud for its only authority; and while it is so miserably supported by Scripture, we cannot, I think, for a moment suppose Christian baptism founded on it.

It must be late
 The fifth chapter contains the reasons why Christian baptism is not founded on, or taken from, the pretended Jewish baptism of Israelites or proselytes.

origin
 1. The Talmuds are of too late a date to prove that this custom obtained before the times of John and Christ, since they were written some centuries after those times. Here the Doctor quotes a number of extravagant conjectures, entertained by learned men, respecting the origin of this rite, which it is unnecessary now to mention. Among these, he thinks Dr Owen's not very probable, tho' more so than many others, viz. that it was adopted by some of the Antimishnical Rabbins in imitation of John the Baptist. His own idea is, that it was employed by the Jews after their dispersion among the heathen, on the general notion of the uncleanness of heathens, and that they, therefore, devised this baptism, as a symbol of purity for proselytes to observe before embracing Judaism.—2. This cus-

tom, though observed as a religious act, has scarce any appearance of devotion, but looks more like a civil affair, it being in some cases under the cognizance of the Sanhedrim, or court of judicature. It was not administered in the name of God. Besides this, baptism was supposed to give a licence to things most impure and abominable. All former relations were supposed dissolved by it. Thus it is said, "When one becomes a proselyte, he and they (his former relations) are not guilty, by reason thereof, on account of incest at all; so that it is according to law, (the civil law of the Jews,) that a Gentile may marry his own mother or his sister, when they become proselytes." Now, is it possible to conceive Christian baptism is at all founded on such a custom as this?—3. It greatly detracts from John's baptism to suppose it founded on this custom. Besides, why do the Jews distinguish John by the title *the Baptist*, if this custom was common? The Scriptures say he was sent to baptise with water, but what need of a commission for this, if such a practice was quite customary? Again, why did the Jews ask of John, "Why baptizest thou if thou art not the Christ?" if it was a common thing to baptise. When the Pharisees were asked, whether the baptism of John was from heaven or of men, had it been according to a prevailing custom, founded on a human tradition, they might readily have said, *Of men*.—4. The Jews will not allow that any proof of baptism can be produced, either from the writings of the

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Old Testament, or from the Talmuds. Thus, a Jew of the twelfth century, when he speaks of receiving proselytes, both men and women, speaks of the former as received by circumcision, but takes no notice of baptism. Had he thought the baptism their Talmud speaks of had any affinity to ours, and was the ground of it, he would not have been so gravelled as he was with an objection of the Christians, which is put thus, "We baptise male and female, and hereby receive them into our religion; but you circumcise men only, and not women." To this he appears quite at a loss how to answer; whereas he might readily have answered, had proselyte baptism been so prevalent as is alleged.—5. To say as Dr Lightfoot does, that Christ took up baptism as he found it, *i. e.* as practised by the Jews, is to derogate from the character and authority of our Lord. It is to make him teach for doctrines the commandments of men, which he himself condemns. We know well the Lord Jesus severely inveighs against the traditions of the Jews, and yet the case before us supposes, that our Lord so far countenanced one of these traditions, as to graft one of his own ordinances upon it.—6. This notion reflects dishonour on the ordinance of baptism, as founded on a human tradition.—7. If it was customary for the Jews to receive children by baptism before the time of John, then it would be reasonable to suppose, we would have had some instances of such being baptised, either by John, or by the Apostles of Christ; but no such

example is to be met with.—8. If this be viewed as the foundation of baptism, persons baptising themselves without an administrator at all, will be supported by it, as this was unquestionably the way in which the baptisms referred to were observed.—9. If this Jewish custom be regarded as the foundation of Christian baptism, it will countenance the Socinian notion, that it is improper to baptise the children of believers in general; that it is a rite only applicable to those who are passing out of a state of heathenism and embracing Christianity; that though the whole family then existing may be baptised, it is improper to baptise the children that may be born afterwards.—10. If this be the foundation of our baptising infants, all the other regulations regarding this baptism, said to be practised by the Jews, should be observed, as that it should be done before three witnesses, men of eminence, &c. but this is not at all applicable to the baptisms mentioned in the New Testament.—11. If this had been the mode of receiving the Ethiopian Eunuch, and other proselytes mentioned in Scripture, on what ground were they baptised again? This looks somewhat like a rebaptization.—12. According to the Jewish custom referred to, when a woman in a state of pregnancy was baptised, the baptism was of equal efficacy to the child, and, of course, it did not need baptism. This, however, is certainly not attended to by Pædo-baptists. In the beginning of the fourth century, some were of the same opinion with the

Jews in this respect: but a canon in the Council of Neocæsarea was made against it; which would not have been the case, had this Jewish practice, even at that period, been considered as the rule. Lastly, As an *argumentum ad hominem*, at least, in this Jewish custom, the only baptism known was dipping. In some of the passages relating to it, the quantity of water necessary is particularly described. Again, as an argument of the same kind, founding Christian baptism on this practice, destroys the common argument for infant baptism, from its coming in the room of circumcision. On this principle, baptism was long cotemporary with circumcision, and, of course, could not come in its room.

Dr Gill concludes

The Doctor concludes his dissertation, then, with boldly asserting, after the most minute inquiry, that “this custom of baptizing children was so far from being common in all ages foregoing the times of John, Christ, and his Apostles, that not a single instance can be given of any one that ever was then baptized.” And adds in the words of Dr Owen, “that the opinion of some learned men concerning transferring the rite of Jewish baptism by the Lord Jesus, which indeed did not then exist, for the use of his disciples, is destitute of all probability.”—So far the Doctor.

After reading this dissertation, I acknowledge, I was led to take a very different view of the evidence in support of the existence of proselyte baptism among the Jews from what I had, from

the confident manner with which it is often brought forward, formerly entertained. There is one part of this argument which the Doctor has touched but slightly, as you will observe from the abstract I have just read to you of his reasoning, but which appears to me deserving of particular consideration. It is this:—Supposing the fact admitted, that it was customary previous to the time of Christ to admit proselytes among the Jews by baptism, it must be acknowledged to be an invention of men, one of the traditions of the elders. No one, I think, will assert that it was founded on divine authority, or will attempt to shew where this mode of initiation was instituted in the Old Testament Scriptures. Now, we well know how, on every other occasion, our Lord treated the traditions of the elders. He condemned them in the most unequivocal manner; and it was one object of his public teaching, to emancipate his disciples, and indeed all that heard him, from their influence. This being the case, then, I acknowledge, it would require very strong evidence, indeed, to convince me that he founded his own ordinance of baptism on one of these unauthorised usages of the elders, which, on every other occasion, he so peremptorily condemned; nay, that he should leave the description of persons to whom this ordinance was to be applied so undefined, that they were left to find out the proper subjects of it, by referring to a practice in receiving proselytes, which was confessedly altogether of human authority, and which, of course,

it became deeply sinful to introduce into the worship of God. Whatever latitude men may take with regard to external institutions in these latter times, nothing is more manifest, than that under the Mosaic dispensation, the introduction of what did not possess divine authority was considered as a heinous violation of the divine law, and exposing the individual chargeable with it to the tokens of the divine displeasure. These are to me most powerful, I had almost said insurmountable, objections to the validity of the argument from proselyte baptism in favour of the practice of infant baptism. Not only can I find no evidence of the practice existing previous to the time of John the Baptist; but, even admitting the fact, it will not support the argument.

Eug. As I formerly mentioned, I never met with Dr Gill's dissertation, which, I see, you have read with a good deal of attention, from the abstract of his argument you have now given me. The fact is so boldly asserted by many, that I may, perhaps, have taken its existence, like you, too easily for granted. At the same time, I can hardly think that there is not more evidence in support of it. You have already, I think, referred to Mr Walker of Dublin's last pamphlet on baptism. You know he speaks most decidedly respecting the existence of this practice; and, in a postscript, he quotes a book where he considers it very fully established. Have you ever seen that publication?

Epen. I have. You may easily conceive, when

I was hunting for evidence in support of this practice, which I was accustomed to consider as making the language of the commission quite consistent with infant baptism, nay, decidedly favourable to it, I was quite impatient to see the publication he refers to. It is a work of Danzius's, edited by Meuschen, and entitled *Novum Testamentum ex Talmude et antiquitatibus Hebræorum, illustratum*. I found, however, little more than the same quotations that are mentioned by Dr Gill. Among these is the strange supposition of one of the Rabbins, that Pharaoh's daughter, when she came down to the river Nile, at the time she found Moses, was baptised as a proselyte; * though it must be confessed this writer does not admit that there is any validity in it. In like manner he notices the equally unfounded imagination, that Jacob received some of the Shechemites into his family by the same rite; Thus he supposes that the language of Jacob to his household, Gen. xxxv. 2., "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments," might, with some probability, be viewed as the origin of this rite, if it were certain that Jacob retained the women his sons had seized when they put the Shechemites to death.† The command given to the Israelites to wash their clothes before the giving of the law, is also particularly mentioned,‡ as the source from which some are inclined to trace this

* Page 264.

† Page 265

‡ Page 266.

usage. The same regulations mentioned by Dr Gill are here too quoted respecting the quantity of water to be used, and the necessity of the whole body being immersed, so that not even the hair or nails should be excepted.*

There is, indeed, one passage particularly noticed by this writer, as countenancing the existence of such a practice, which, so far as I recollect, is not referred to by Dr Gill, and that is, Ezek. xvi. 9. "Then I washed thee with water." Now, can you conceive any thing farther fetched than such quotations? While the Jewish nation is presented under the figure of a female child exposed, the Lord is represented as having compassion on her, and as bringing her up till she was fit for marriage. The marriage union is then represented as taking place, agreeably to the figure, often used to denote the connection between God and the peculiar people. But before this union, the nation, under this figure of a female, was to undergo those ablutions which, in such cases, were customary in ancient times. Surely, then, nothing can be more extravagant than, without any evidence, to suppose, that such figurative language refers to the baptism of the Israelites. Again, after placing their supposed baptism on such a foundation, it is added, the baptism of proselytes flowed from it as a rivulet from its fountain.† But if we know so little of the fountain, what reliance can we place on the quality of the stream? This author, in-

* Page 280, 283.

† Page 287.

deed, remarks, that it was not his design very particularly to enquire into the circumstances attending the introduction of baptism among the Jews, as they are very *slightly noticed by the Talmudists, and totally omitted in Scripture.** When I met with such a concession from a quarter from which I expected, if any where, to get satisfaction on this point; when I found this practice traced to suppositions, which appeared so extravagant as its origin; when it was fairly acknowledged, that the Scriptures said nothing, and even the Talmudists very little, respecting the circumstances of that Jewish baptism, which is referred to as the source from which this proselyte baptism so often mentioned is said to flow; you will not be surprised, that I could no longer admit it as affording me a principle by which I was to explain the language of Christ's commission to his Apostles.

There is, indeed, one remark made by this writer, which has often occurred to myself, and which I have no doubt is also familiar to your mind, viz. that when the Pharisees asked John the Baptist why he baptised, seeing he was neither the Christ nor that prophet, they do not enquire what baptism was, but seem to speak of it as something already known. This is the most plausible thing I have heard advanced in favour of the supposition, that baptism was known to the Jews previous to the time of John. Without some additional evidence, however, I could

* Page 269.

not found on this text the doctrine of proselyte baptism. The language used on that occasion may, I think, be easily explained on other principles. Thus, it is manifest that a number of purifications were common among the Jews, and these are called in the Epistle to the Hebrews divers baptisms. Now, had John been either the Christ, or that prophet that was expected, the Jews would have had no reason to be surprised at the institution of a new baptism. The Christ that was to come was described as a prophet like unto Moses; and, as Moses instituted a number of these ablutions, it would not have been matter of surprise, had the Messiah appointed something similar. Nay, this was sometimes done even by the prophets. Thus the prophet Elisha commanded Naaman the Syrian to wash in Jordan seven times for his leprosy. Now it would have been quite incompetent for any one but a prophet of the Lord to have prescribed such a purification; for you will observe the purification, or what was literally the baptism, appointed by Elisha on this occasion, was something totally different from the ceremonies commanded to be observed by the priest, in the ordinary cases of a leper being cleansed. This may be seen by comparing Leviticus xiv. and 2 Kings v. We have here, then, an express example of a prophet appointing a new baptism, *i. e.* an application of water in a way not instituted in the law. This appears to me, then, to throw a good deal of light on the passage in question, and to be a case quite in point.

On why baptize them?

The Jews knew what baptisms were, though the baptism of John, or washing with water simply, as a token of a profession of repentance, was new to them. The language of the Jews on this occasion, supposes that they would not have been surprised at any such new purification being appointed by the Christ, or the prophet that was expected. Accordingly all the surprise they express is, that John instituted and administered this new purification, while he denied that he was either the Christ or that prophet. What do you think of this explanation?

Eug. This view of the text is one that has not occurred to me before; and I am not quite prepared to give an opinion on it. But, had you not introduced it, I was going to mention this passage, as one that always struck me as strongly favouring the idea that baptism was not a novelty to the Pharisees, when they put the question to John respecting his reason for baptizing.

Epen. I perfectly agree with you, that it establishes this; and it is undeniable, that, according to the language of the Apostle, as well as the Old Testament Scriptures, the Jews had divers baptisms among them. But this particular way of applying baptism, as connected with a profession of repentance, might, notwithstanding this, be a new institution; and hence, I think, this language will not necessarily imply that proselyte baptism was known at that time.

Eug. If I recollect right, Taylor of Norwich, in his tract on the Abrahamic covenant, and its

connection with infant baptism, quotes Lightfoot in confirmation of the practice of proselyte baptism. Have you ever looked into his works?

Epen. I have; and I found the passage Taylor refers to by no means calculated to confirm the supposition, that the Lord Jesus would found his ordinance of baptism on any institution of this kind, alleged to have been practised by the Jews. The passage referred to simply mentions, (and it must be on the doubtful authority of some of the Talmudical writers,) that in the days of Solomon, so many proselytes professed Judaism, that, *instead of* circumcising them, they received them by baptism.* Now, there is here not only the introduction of what was not commanded, but the omission of what was; literally setting aside the commandments of God by their traditions. Surely one cannot, then, for a moment suppose, that, admitting this story to be true, the Lord Jesus would have left his people to make out the interpretation of his command respecting baptism, or to learn the manner of observing it, from what was so palpable a violation of divine authority. Among other writers, you will find Ainsworth, in his valuable annotations on the Pentateuch,

* Dr Lightfoot's words are, "Et certe admittendi proselytos ratio hæc fuit, scilicet per circumcisionem; sed tempore Solomonis quando proselytorum integræ chiliades accedebant, ii, ut Judæi nonnulli testantur baptismo sive lotionem admissi fuere." *Lightfoot's Works*, Vol. II. p. 200. cap. xxvi. *De Sacramentis Judæorum*.

Taylor not
supported

quoting this practice of proselyte baptism as common among the Jews. Thus, in his commentary on Gen. xvii. 12, he mentions as what he collected from the Jewish doctors, that there were three ways in which the Israelites were received into covenant with God, viz. by circumcision, by baptism, and by sacrifice; and that Gentiles were to be received in the same way. The passage to which he refers in confirmation of the baptism alluded to, is the same formerly mentioned, viz. Exod. xix. 10, where the Israelites were commanded to wash their clothes before the giving of the law from Sinai. But this information he quotes from Maimonides. Now, though he was esteemed an able compiler and commentator, yet it must be recollected he lived in the twelfth century, and he could only proceed on the authority of the Talmudical writers, which, as we have already seen, does not go far enough back to establish the point in question, even admitting their authority, if we had it, to be good. It is a remarkable fact, too, that this same Maimonides, after spending much time in commenting upon the Gemara, cautions others against following his example, as, he says, he had reaped little advantage from it.* Thus vain have been all my attempts to discover, what I most sincerely wished to discover, some satisfactory evidence in support of this practice, which is so often and so

* His words are, "Cave ne tempus tuum teras in expositione et operosa consideratione Gemaræ; ego enim in illò multum temporis perdidi et parum utilitatis hausi."

boldly brought forward as the method by which we are to ascertain how the Apostles, as Jews, would understand our Lord's command to go and baptise all nations.

Eug. As I formerly noticed, my good friend, I cannot be expected to be so much at home upon this subject as you are, as perhaps I have never examined it so minutely; and at any rate, it is a considerable time since I particularly turned my attention to it. I can neither all at once, then, acquiesce in your quotations, nor am I prepared to dispute them. But do you not think there is at least a considerable appearance of truth in what has often been alleged, that the word *teach* or *disciple* all nations, does not necessarily exclude children, seeing the Scriptures speak of the Jews being Moses' disciples, and we know they were in a state of discipleship under the Mosaic dispensation from their infancy. In like manner, the children of believers are in a similar state, enjoying the advantage of being brought up in the knowledge of divine truth, from their earliest years. This I have always considered as one distinguishing circumstance in the situation of the children of Christian parents; and it cannot be denied to be a very valuable privilege. When a parent is brought to the knowledge of the gospel, his children, as a matter of course, may be considered as brought into a state of discipleship, or of being educated in the knowledge of the gospel. From the general profession of Christianity in our day, we may be less sensible of the

distinguished advantage of being descended from Christians; but if you consider the state of things in early times, and think of Christians living in the midst of heathens, and that, while the children of the one class were carried to the church of Christ, those of the other were carried to the temples of idols, the importance of being connected with Christian parents will more conspicuously appear.

Epen. I am by no means disposed to question, I assure you, the importance of being descended from Christian parents. I think we formerly talked of this. But though this is admitted, the inference that, therefore, the infant children of Christians should be baptised, will not at all follow. Two or three remarks occur to me on what you have just stated. 1. If the existence of the peculiar advantage of being under a Christian's roof, and of being in a state of training or enjoying the advantage of instruction, be an argument for children being baptised, you must allow me to bring in along with them my old friends all the slaves of a Christian master, who would be certainly distinguished by the same advantage.—2. I should be really at a loss to say, that an infant of a week or two old was in a state of discipleship, taking even the most extensive view you may of what is implied in training up a person as a disciple.—But, 3. The best way to ascertain the proper use of this word, is to see how it is used elsewhere. The word rendered *teach* or *disciple*, in that part of the commission which says, “go and teach all na-

tions, occurs, I think, only other three times in Scripture. In Matt. xiii. 52. it is rendered *instructed*. "Therefore every Scribe who is *instructed* unto the kingdom," &c. It is next applied to Joseph of Arimathea, Matt. xxvii. 57. who, it is said, "was himself also a disciple of Jesus," literally, was *discipled by* or *to* Jesus. Again it is used Acts xiv. 21., where we are told of Paul and Barnabas, that when they had *taught* many, literally, *discipled* many; they returned again to Lystra. Now as in each of these passages it plainly means those who were capable of receiving instruction, I confess I should think it forcing the language of Scripture, to suppose that it can bear any other meaning in the commission which Christ gave to his Apostles. When I ask myself this question; upon the supposition that the Lord Jesus intended that his Apostles should first teach men, or make them disciples, and then baptise them, could he have used language more calculated to express his meaning? I must answer, he could not. It is this fair natural meaning of the language of the commission, then, especially when illustrated by the subsequent history of the way in which baptism was observed in the Apostolic age, along with the considerations I formerly mentioned, respecting the inconclusiveness of the reasoning from the Abrahamic covenant, which fairly shook my confidence in infant baptism.

Eug. I should be very happy to hear any observations you have to suggest on the other pas-

sages of Scripture generally introduced into this controversy ; but I have, unfortunately, a particular engagement at this hour, so I must leave you. However, if you choose, we can meet again this day week, if that time will suit you. If you can call upon me, we shall talk over any thing farther that may have occurred to you respecting the arguments usually brought forward on this subject.

Epen. I certainly feel myself indebted to you for the patient hearing you have already given me. I acknowledge it will be to me very gratifying, if you can afford leisure to hear me out. I wish very much, if you see any fallacy in any part of my reasoning, that you would state it. I know you will have the candour to do so, if you detect it ; and, though you may not perceive it at first, by reflecting on the subject afterwards, if any inaccuracy exist, you will very probably discover where it lies. I shall therefore most thankfully accept of your proposal, and (God willing) call upon you this day week.

Eug. Well, I shall be happy to see you at the same hour.

CONVERSATION IV.

Remarks...on the general tenor of the Apostolic history respecting baptism...Acts ii. 39...1 Cor. vii. 14...the baptism of households ...Col. ii. 11...Gal. iii....Acts xv...Rom. xi.

Epen. I HAVE been unavoidably detained a little beyond my time; but I have made no unnecessary delay in coming to you. I hope you are all well this evening.

Eug. I thank you; we are all, through the divine blessing, in good health. I was beginning to fear, indeed, that you had forgot your appointment. I think we were talking last night of the Apostolic commission; and you gave me your reasons for thinking it did not include the infant seed of believers. Nothing farther has occurred to me with regard to that passage than what I formerly stated; and I have had no leisure to make any enquiry yet into the state of the evidence respecting proselyte baptism. But, after all, you do not, I hope, think there is no difficulty attaches to the Baptist side of the question, even from that part of the Scriptures which relates to the history of baptism. There are different parts of the Apostolic history respecting the application of this ordinance, which, to say the least of them, seem to have a very fa-

avourable aspect to infant baptism. What, for example, do you think of the language of Peter to his countrymen, Acts ii. 39. "For the promise is to you and to your *children*." This looks so like the language of the promise to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee and *thy seed*," that I should think it most natural for Jews to understand the Apostle's language as implying, that while they whom he immediately addressed believed, they should not only be baptised themselves, but their children should be baptised along with them.

Epen. With regard to the New Testament history, I think it cannot well be denied, that the general tenor of it, at least, is decidedly in favour of the supposition, that baptism was connected with a profession of faith. Thus if we go back to John's baptism, those who partook of it confessed their sins.* When we come to Christian baptism as practised by the Apostles, *they that gladly received the word*, it is said, were baptised.† In another part of the history we are told, when those who heard Philip preach *believed, they were baptised, both men and women*.‡ This last passage appears to me particularly strong, as, from the specification of the different sexes here, it would have been so natural to have mentioned children, had they also been baptised. It properly comes under the head of circumstantial evidence; but it has peculiar force, when we compare it with the stile of the

* Matt. iii. 6. † Acts ii. 41. ‡ Acts viii. 12.

sacred writers, and mark the manner in which they introduce children along with men and women on other occasions. Thus, in the account of our Lord's miraculous increase of the loaves and fishes, the women and *children* are mentioned as partaking of them, as well as the men.* Again, when the disciples at Tyre were taking leave of Paul, it is said, "they all brought us on our way, with wives and *children*, till we were out of the city."† On the other hand, when Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples, desired letters to Damascus, to bring them bound to Jerusalem, as children were incapable of discipleship, only men and women are included in the description.‡ In like manner, (to pursue the Apostolic history,) when Paul preached at Corinth, it is said, "*many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptised.*"|| But I need not multiply passages of this description.

With regard to the text you have quoted from the address of Peter to his countrymen on the day of Pentecost, I shall shortly state to you on what grounds I conceive it cannot, with any propriety, be employed in support of infant baptism. I need hardly remark, that we are apt to be misled by the word *children* here, as if it imported those who were in a state of childhood, or infancy. You well know the original word is often used for persons grown up. I shall only mention one example among many that might be quoted:

* Matt. xiv. 21. † Acts xxi. 5. ‡ Acts ix. 2. || Acts xviii. 8.

I was struck with it the other day, in reading the Greek Testament. In that passage where our Lord addresses a man who had been sick of the palsy, but whom he had healed, he says, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," literally *child*; the same word with the one used in Peter's address. To me it is quite clear, that the promise referred to in this passage is not the promise to Abraham, but the promise contained in the prophecy of Joel, mentioned in ver. 17, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Here there is a distinct promise of the effusion of the Holy Ghost in the latter days. In the course of the Apostle's address, he represents this promise as then fulfilled; ver. 33, "Therefore (Jesus) being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the *promise* of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." When after this, then, in answer to the enquiry of those who were pricked in their heart, Peter says, "Repent and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord

our God shall call ;” it seems quite manifest that the promise referred to is the only one mentioned in the context, that respecting the spirit, quoted from Joel.

Now supposing this admitted, which seems quite unquestionable, what did this promise contain? First, that the Lord would pour out his spirit on his people in the latter days ; secondly, that it should be poured out on their children, *i. e.* their sons and daughters, who, in token of their receiving it, should prophecy ; and, thirdly, that it was not to be confined to the peculiar people, but to be extended to all flesh, men of every nation, who should be blessed with the call of the gospel, seeing it was said, “ Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But the question here occurs, what has the promise of the divine spirit to those sons and daughters who were capable of prophesying, and thus shewing that they were partakers of his influences, to do with the administration of baptism to infants, or those who were quite incapable of shewing that they had received the spirit? Again, the Apostle admonishes those he addressed to repent and be baptised. The encouragement he holds out to them is, that they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ; and the foundation of this encouragement was the promise of God. But this promise equally extended to their children, *i. e.* their sons and daughters capable of prophesying. It was, therefore, on the same footing, a ground of encouragement to them to repent and

be baptised. Nay, it extended even to them who were afar off, who should enjoy the call of the gospel; and to them it was, in like manner, an inducement to repent and receive baptism.

There are here, then, three distinct classes mentioned in the prophecy; those immediately addressed; their children, or (in the words of Joel,) their sons and daughters, who were to prophecy; and those afar off. Repentance is undoubtedly connected with baptism in the first and last classes. The middle class, according to the prophecy of Joel, were equally capable of it. Why then should we deviate from the plain meaning of the passage, and suppose any included who were neither capable of repentance nor of prophesying? If we include infants in the second class, we not only find a class introduced not mentioned in the prophecy in which the promise referred to is found, but a class who were altogether incapable of feeling the force of the argument in support of which this prophecy is brought forward. We should surely, in this case, be chargeable with reasoning very illogically. Our argument would run thus: Because there was a promise given of the spirit to the Jews, and to such of their children as were capable of prophesying, and because this is stated as an inducement to them to repent and be baptised; therefore we are to conclude that their infants were to be baptised, who were altogether incapable of prophesying, and who were equally incapable of that repent-

ance, as an inducement to which this promise is quoted.

Eug. As I formerly stated, I shall be willing to hear your explanation of those texts which are generally introduced on this subject, and appear to favour infant baptism, though I may not be able, all at once, to detect any inaccuracy in your interpretation of them. Let me next ask you, then, how you explain 1 Cor. vii. 14., respecting the unbelieving husband being sanctified to the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife being sanctified to the believing husband, else were your children unclean, says the Apostle, but now are they holy. I have always considered the common Baptist explanation of that passage a very forced one. You know well, that it is usually interpreted as referring to *legitimacy*. Now, certainly there is such a thing as lawful wedlock, even among those who have no pretensions to Christianity. But this mode of interpretation would bastardise all who are not born of parents, one of whom at least is a Christian. Surely you do not think this explanation a *legitimate* one; and if not, how do you explain the passage, so as not to include the idea of some federal holiness as connected with being the offspring of believers, or at least of being descended from parents, one of whom possesses this character.

Epen. Your remark is, I think, a very natural one, but it entirely arises from the use of an unhappy word in the explanation Baptists usually

give of this passage; I mean the word *legitimate*. This term immediately suggests the idea of human laws, and of the act to which it is applied being tried by this standard. Now there is certainly no reference to human laws in the Apostle's reasoning, in the passage in question; hence being unclean cannot refer to illegitimacy, in the common acceptation of that expression. But I understand the passage thus: The word here rendered unclean, is applied to meats that could not be used agreeably to the divine law. Acts x. 14. Peter, when commanded to kill and eat, says, I have never eaten any thing common or *unclean*, i. e. that which the law of God did not allow me to use as food, and which, instead of being *received*, is to be *rejected*, or put away. Opposed to that which is thus *unclean*, is that which is *holy*, or that which can be used or enjoyed, agreeably to the divine commandment. Thus, 1 Tim. iv. 4., "Every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused, (rejected, or put away,) if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is *sanctified*, (rendered holy, or enjoyed agreeably to the divine will,) by the word of God, (authorising us to partake of it,) and prayer." It deserves notice, that it is a word of the same origin that is used by the LXX. for putting away the idolatrous wives in the time of Ezra, that is employed to denote rejecting or refusing certain kinds of food, in this passage in the epistle to Timothy.* Now

* EZRA x. 3. *εκβαλειν*; 1 Tim. iv. 4. *αποβαλεν*.

this appears to me clearly the way in which *unclean* and *holy* are used in 1 Cor. vii. As I have already noticed, the word *legitimate* is apt to mislead. It refers to human laws; but what is agreeable to human laws, and thus in the common sense of the expression *legitimate*, is often quite contrary to the divine law. Thus the children of two unbelievers, where the parents are regularly married, are perfectly legitimate in the eye of human laws; but if it be true that the ploughing of the wicked is sin, that every thing that an unbeliever does or enjoys, is neither done nor enjoyed agreeably to the divine law, seeing the grand principle of action that the law requires is wanting, viz. a regard to the glory of God; then unbelievers cannot enjoy their offspring agreeably to the divine law. Their children are not rendered holy to them, in the only way that any created enjoyment is so rendered to the possessor, viz. being sanctified, or made holy, by the word of God, (*i. e.* the possessor enjoying it agreeably to the frame of mind, the doctrine, and precepts, enjoined in the word of God,) and by prayer.

I may here remark, in passing, how unfounded the triumphant language is which Mr Baxter uses on this subject, and which has been so often echoed by others. He boasts over his opponent, Mr Tombs, who had adopted the phrase *legitimate* in explaining the term *holy* here, that while the sense of federal holiness, which he (Mr Baxter) put upon it occurred nearly six hundred times in Scripture, it was not to be found in the sense

of *legitimacy* in a single instance. In the sense, however, which I have stated, it is undeniable, that it occurs as frequently as we have in Scripture the distinction marked between what is clean or holy. or to be used agreeably to the divine will, and what is common or unclean. Nay we can with confidence go back to the radical meaning of holiness, viz. that which is separated from a common to a sacred use, to be employed agreeably to the will of God, and in his service. The Christian is himself thus sanctified or separated to God; and whatever he enjoys, he enjoys with the peculiar blessing of God. Whatever he has, whether property, or wife, or children, are thus holy to him, as he endeavours to act in regard to all, agreeably to the will of God, and enjoys a special blessing with all he possesses.

I understand the passage thus, then, Let not the unbelieving wife and the believing husband separate, for the unbelieving wife is sanctified to the husband by the word of God, *i. e.* it is agreeable to the word of God they should live together. Hence he enjoys the blessing of God in living with her; and in like manner the unbelieving husband is sanctified to the believing wife. Otherwise, if it were not agreeable to the divine law that they should thus continue together, (as, for example, was the case in the days of Ezra, see chap. x. 3.) your children would be unclean, like unclean meats which you could not use or enjoy, they would need to be rejected. But now, from the propriety of the believing husband con-

tinuing to live with the unbelieving wife being recognised by the divine law, your children are holy, you can enjoy them, having the blessing of God with them, just as you enjoy every kind of food which is rendered holy in the same way, by the word of God, being used agreeably to the divine authority, and by prayer.

This view of the passage has this peculiar advantage, that it gives the same meaning to the holiness of the unbelieving wife, and the holiness of the children; while, by the view commonly taken of it by Pædo-baptists, or at least by the only one that will favour their system, the holiness of an unbelieving wife or husband, and that of the children, (though, as you well know, the words in the original are the same,) must be quite different. No one speaks of the federal holiness of the unbelieving husband or wife, though the same language is used in regard to them, which is employed to denote the supposed federal holiness of the offspring. On the other hand, as in this passage the holiness of the children, be what it may, is represented as manifestly depending on that of the unbelieving husband or wife, is it not most natural to understand, that it is the same kind of holiness that is to be understood of both? But that of the unbeliever does not denote that of being devoted to the Lord in baptism, but being enjoyed according to the will of God. On this ground, the holiness of the children must naturally mean, then, the same thing. Thus this explanation goes on a great broad principle, uni-

versally recognised in Scripture, that whenever we find our enjoyment of any comfort contrary to the divine will, it is to be parted with. Thus, if a man found the food he partook of condemned by the divine law, he was to give it up. If it was contrary to the divine law to continue with an idolatrous wife, as was the case in the days of Ezra, he was to leave her; and in this case, the children he had by her were to be put away. On the other hand, if it was agreeable to the will of God for a man to remain with his wife, though an unbeliever, both his wife and his children were sanctified to him, *i. e.* he enjoyed them agreeably to the divine will, and with the divine blessing.

Eug. You have repeatedly referred to what happened in the days of Ezra in connection with this passage. Now I have been accustomed to consider the one of these parts of Scripture as calculated to illustrate the other; but I should be inclined to draw the very opposite conclusion. Thus, in the days of Ezra, the children of the idolatrous wives were not to be mingled with the holy seed, who had the seal of the covenant. They were unclean, in opposition to that holy seed; and hence, is it not natural to suppose that the seed called holy in the New Testament, like the holy seed of old, partook of the seal of God's covenant?

Epen. The links of this chain of reasoning do not seem to hang well together. In the first place, it takes for granted the fact, that baptism is to be administered to infants, as well as circumci-

sion. Secondly, that this is the natural import of the word *holy* here, while it is manifestly used quite in a different sense in the immediate context; and I have endeavoured to shew, that the scope of the passage requires a different interpretation of it. But, thirdly, it farther assumes as a fact, of which there is no evidence, that none of those children of the Jews, though by idolatrous wives, in the days of Ezra, were circumcised. Now I conceive there is, on the other hand, every reason to suppose that some of them, at least, would be so. But this did not make them holy, which if the holiness here referred to the seal of the covenant, it would have done. Their uncleanness depended not on their being destitute of circumcision, it remained whether they were circumcised or not. It arose from their being born of idolatrous mothers, while it was quite contrary to the divine law for the Jews to have such women as wives. Accordingly, all the children were put away as unclean, the daughters as well as the sons, although there could not in their case be this mark of difference between them and the holy seed. This is, to me, a satisfactory evidence, that here there is no reference to that holiness that arose from circumcision. These children were not unclean as being uncircumcised; their uncleanness arose from a different quarter, so that both males and females were unclean, and the former were unclean whether circumcised or not. On this ground, even if infant baptism were admitted, and if this passage in

Corinthians were supposed to relate to the same subject with that in Ezra, which I believe it does, it could not be fairly argued, that the holiness here related to baptism, but to that enjoyment of the unbelieving partner, and of the children which were the result of the connection, which is now agreeable to the will of God.

Besides, there are other objections, and these, as they appear to me, very weighty ones against the Pædo-baptist interpretation of this passage. Thus the common interpretation supposes the believing parent, (even though it were the mother, who has naturally least influence in the family,) to have such power as to apply the initiatory ordinance of the Christian system to her children. Now it is not easily conceived, that a heathen father would allow his believing wife to do this. In the case of Timothy we find a striking instance of circumcision being omitted in infancy, though his mother was a godly character, because his father was a Greek. His being uncircumcised is mentioned as a thing well known to the Jews, *because they knew his father was a Greek*. This clearly intimates, that it was not unusual to omit this rite, when a child was born by a Jewess to a father belonging to another nation. While in this case, then, the mother had so little influence, I should think any interpretation of a passage very questionable, which took for granted her full power, though she had an unbelieving husband, to baptise her children, while we know,

that Christianity was not less obnoxious to the heathen world than Judaism, nay more so.

But farther, this last part of verse 14. must be construed either with the 13th verse or the first part of the 14th. Now, try it either way, and I think it will not be found applicable to that federal holiness which is pleaded for. Thus, if I say, "if the unbelieving husband be pleased to dwell with his wife, let her not leave him,—else were your children unclean, but now are they holy," it would not be true, that if the children were already baptised, and in this sense holy, the subsequent separation of the parents could destroy that holiness. Or suppose we read it thus, (which, indeed, appears the most natural construction,) "for the unbelieving wife is sanctified by (or to) the husband, and the unbelieving husband is sanctified by (or to) the wife, if it were not so your children would be unclean, but now they are holy:" What, then, will follow, if we suppose the holiness here refers to baptism. The Corinthians had written to Paul for his direction in certain cases of difficulty. One of these regarded the conduct of a believer, when connected in marriage with an unbeliever. The Apostle says, ver. 12. "To the rest I speak, not the Lord," to shew that he was not at the time going to inculcate what was taught by Christ during his personal ministry; but to answer their enquiries, and to give them direction in a case that had puzzled them. Here, then, *for the first time*, they receive the information that the be-

believer and unbeliever should remain together. The reason given is, that the unbelieving party is sanctified to the believer. From this it is inferred, that their children, who would otherwise have been unclean, are now holy. But if this means their being baptised, it would imply the absurdity of the parents having been acting on this inference before they received from the Apostle that information and those directions from which it was drawn. It would imply, that these children were baptised in ignorance; for the Corinthians did not know, till the Apostle wrote, that those children were holy, one of whose parents was an infidel. This holiness depended on a part of divine truth, they did not know till they received the Apostle's letter, viz. the lawfulness of a believer continuing in the marriage connection with an unbeliever. Thus, in whatever way you construe the passage, it is not easy to see how any tolerable sense can be made of it, if we suppose it to refer to the baptism of the children. I think, then, we may fairly argue, that the Apostle cannot here refer to baptism;* otherwise, 1. This baptism must have

* In a paper in the Christian Instructor, (a new periodical work lately begun in Edinburgh, and conducted with much ability,) this text, as well as Acts ii. 39. and Matt. xix. 14. has with much candour been given up, as having no connection with the argument regarding infant baptism. This paper has been followed by another, by the same writer, in which he gives what he conceives the real and solid grounds on which infant baptism is to be supported. These consist, 1. In the common

been the result of ignorance at the time the Corinthians observed it ; 2. If the children had been baptised already, the effect could not be destroyed, their holiness could not be done away by any subsequent separation of the parents ; and it is manifest, the uncleanness spoken of could not relate to any subsequent children, because the separation of the parents precluded the idea of such existing.

Eug. I confess some of your remarks on this passage are new to me ; but allow me to observe, that the same objection would, in a certain degree, lie against your own interpretation, which you have urged against the one you have been combating. If I understand your argument, it is this : Holiness cannot refer to baptism here, because it would imply, that the Corinthians baptised their children in certain circumstances, before they knew it was lawful for them to do so. In short, that there is an anachronism in the argument, (if I may so express it,) a mistake in point of time as it implies, that they had acted upon the Apostle's information before they received it. Now, will not the same objection lie against your own interpretation ? It supposes

argument from circumcision ; and, 2. In the practice of the early Christians. If these Conversations should be so fortunate as to meet the eye of this writer, it is presumed he will find objections to the validity of both of these arguments, which he has not at least considered in the paper referred to, and which, in reviewing the subject, may not be altogether undeserving of his attention.—See *Christian Instructor*, No. V. p. 311. ; and No. VII. p. 92.

holiness to mean the lawful enjoyment of the children; does not this imply, that they had been enjoying their children before the Apostle told them it was lawful to do so?

Epen. I am happy to see, my dear friend, you enter so fully into the force of my argument, as is implied in this objection. But there is this material difference between the two cases: On my interpretation things merely remained as they were, till they got the Apostle's advice; they neither separated from the unbeliever, nor put away the offspring, till they received direction. On the other supposition, they must have done something *positively* in devoting their offspring to God, before they knew the ground on which they lawfully could do so. I think you have both discernment to perceive, and candour to allow, that there is a material difference between these two cases.

Eug. I acknowledge this is fair. By the way, your quoting the case of Timothy's not being circumcised in infancy, recalls to my recollection an argument I heard urged lately by a strenuous Pædo-baptist, founded on there being no mention made of Timothy's baptism. He observed, that, if Timothy's baptism had been recorded after he became an adult, he thought it would have decided the question; but its not being so, gives us every reason to think, from the character of his mother, that he was baptised in infancy.

Epen. I am not aware that there is any force in this, or that any conclusion whatever can be

drawn from it. Would not the same reasoning lead us to infer, that circumcision was not observed in infancy, since, notwithstanding the character of Timothy's mother, he was not then circumcised? But admitting infant baptism to be practised in the Apostolic age, the same reason which prevented Timothy's being circumcised in infancy, would, in all likelihood, have also prevented his being baptised, viz. his father being a Greek. Besides, according to your own expression; is there not an anachronism in the argument; the dates do not suit. Thus, the conversion of Paul is generally supposed to have taken place towards the end of 36, or the beginning of 37. It was not many years after this that Timothy joined him. Though you suppose him to be young then, as was probably the case, he was, at least, come the length of being a companion to the Apostle, and of having such a formed character, so well reported of by the brethren, as induced Paul to take him along with him. This would clearly make the period of his infancy prior to the institution of Christian baptism altogether.

Eug. I acknowledge I did not see much force in my friend's remark, as it must be allowed there are many disciples mentioned in Scripture, of whose baptism no notice is taken, though it cannot, on this account, be doubted that they were baptised. But I should like to know what you make of the baptised households, mentioned in Scripture. You will surely allow that this is a part of the history which, at first sight at least,

strongly favours infant baptism. I am aware of what has been often said on this subject, viz. that the account given of some of the households clearly indicates that they were composed of adults; as the household of Stephanas ministered to the saints, and that of the jailor rejoiced in the Lord. But the case of Lydia's household has always appeared to me a very strong one. Nothing is said of any one's faith but her own; and yet no sooner is her baptism spoken of than the baptism of her household is immediately added, in connection with it. Certainly, if you take the words of the narration simply as they stand, an impartial reader would naturally conclude, that the household was baptised on Lydia's faith. It is the striking coincidence between the language here used and the state of things under the former dispensation, where we well know the household was circumcised in connection with the faith of the head of the family when he embraced Judaism, that makes the argument from this case so peculiarly strong, that I think you will not easily get quit of it.

Epen. I acknowledge there is, at first sight, a good deal of plausibility in this statement, and I have often argued from it in defence of infant baptism: But I conceive, on a closer examination of the passage, you will find there are some material objections against drawing this conclusion from it. In the first place, you will remark, that if you bring in all Lydia's household as receiving baptism, in connection with her belie-

ving, you must allow me to bring in my old friends the slaves, as well as the children. As no mention is made of Lydia's having a husband, and as she seems to have been a woman in what we would call rather easy circumstances, from her readiness to entertain the Apostle and his friends, there is surely as much reason to conclude, that this household comprehended slaves as children. But though I have formerly shewn, that all the slaves of the family were unquestionably to be circumcised, in connection with the profession of their master, I suppose you would hardly go this length in regard to Lydia's slaves, although a reference to the state of things under the former dispensation would expressly require you to do so. Were we to take the words strictly and literally, they would evidently require us to suppose, that the adult members of Lydia's household were baptised on her faith, as well as her children, if there were any. If this, however, is a conclusion quite untenable, it shews the historian's language cannot thus be understood. But if its literal meaning cannot be adopted, every rule of fair criticism will require us to explain this passage by others where the same subject is introduced, and in these we uniformly find baptism connected with a profession of faith on the part of the person baptised.

Farther, if you will look to another passage in the context, you will see the impropriety of taking expressions in their strictly literal sense, without adverting to the language used on the

same subject, in other parts of the word of God. Thus in ver. 31., in Paul's address to the jailor, it is said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Compare this with "and when she was baptised, and her household," and I think you must allow, that if, from the language in the one case, I am entitled to believe that Lydia's household was baptised on her personal faith, I am equally entitled to infer in the other, that the house of the jailor would be saved on his personal faith.* If it is

* This is the view which Mr John Glas entertained of this subject. He seems to have conceived, that it was clearly a matter of revelation, that a man's household would be saved in connection with his personally believing; that, therefore, this ought to be a matter of faith; and that, of course, when the child of a professing Christian was not found walking as one interested in this salvation, it was to be imputed to the parent not exercising this faith in reference to the salvation of his household, and not following up this belief by the proper instruction of his children. His words are---"He that, according to the call of the Saviour, believes on him, not only for his own salvation, but also for the salvation of his house, is by this faith qualified and fitted for bringing up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If our children grow up in alienation from salvation by the faith of Christ, we cannot excuse ourselves by this, that we could not communicate grace to them, as is commonly done in this case. But we ought rather to examine ourselves, if we have indeed believed in the Saviour for their salvation as well as our own." Again---"If a man has indeed believed in the Saviour for the salvation of his house, as well as his own salvation, he cannot despair of his house upon present appearances to the contrary, but must still hope for the salvation of his family, according to that which is spoken, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

said in the one case, there is no mention made of the faith of the household previous to baptism, but only of Lydia's own faith, is it not equally

Here, then, we are called by Mr Glas to believe that there is as real a connection between the personal faith of a Christian parent and the salvation of his family, as there is between his personal faith and his own salvation. But this is too easily taken for granted in the passages now quoted, as being founded on this text in Acts xvi. 31. Before we are called to believe that the salvation of a family is connected with the faith of the head of it, we are entitled to require that this doctrine be clearly established as a matter of revelation. Now, how is this established by Mr Glas? He asserts it is contained in this passage, though we have shewn the language here used is susceptible of another interpretation, completely agreeable to the other parts of Scripture, while his interpretation is not so. I make this assertion, because the uniform language of Scripture makes personal faith, in an adult at least, absolutely necessary to salvation. Now, Mr Glas does not confine the salvation that flows from the faith of the head of a family to his infant children, but extends it to all who, according to the views of the Old Testament dispensation, were strictly members of his household. Hence he says---“ If the jailor believed, not only for his own salvation, but also, as he was called, for the salvation of his house; all his house might as well be saved by that faith, as men's children or *slaves* were miraculously healed, by the parents or masters believing that Jesus was able to do it; seeing the one salvation by faith is the sign of the other.” See *Glas's Works*, Vol. III. p. 154—158.

Here, then, faith is explicitly supposed not necessary, even in an adult, to salvation. It is not merely he that believeth that shall be saved; but he that is so happy as to be connected with a believing parent or master, shall, through the faith of this head of the family, partake of the same blessings with the believing parent or master himself. How inconsistent this is with the uniform tenor of the New Testament Scriptures, which connect salvation, not with any merely external relation to a believer, but with the personal faith of every individual, it is needless to take time to illustrate.

manifest in the other, that no mention is made of the faith of the Jailor's house, but only of his personally believing? In short, the expressions are completely parallel. But how do we explain the one regarding the faith of the jailor? Do we say that his personal faith would secure the salvation of all his household? No! we say, in this case, the necessity of their believing is plainly to be understood, as in other parts of Scripture, salvation is uniformly connected with the faith of the individual to be saved. Now, why not apply the same reasoning here? Ought we not, on the same ground, in the case of Lydia, to say, the faith of her household must be understood, as in other passages baptism and a profession of faith uniformly go together.

I know it has been here asked, Why then say "thy house?" If the necessity of faith was implied, why did not Paul say, all Philippi, nay, all the world, shall be saved?—There seems a sufficiently natural reason for speaking of the jailor's house exclusively here. Not only they would be

I forbear to animadvert on Mr Glas's singular interpretation of the expression "rejoicing with all his house;" by which he supposes it means the jailor rejoiced "in all his house," going from one apartment to another, expressing his joy. He makes an equally strange assertion, when he adds, that "it will be hard to prove, and so to be assured from the text, that the jailor had any other house but little children." When the sacred historian informs us, that Paul "spoke the word of the Lord to all that were in the jailor's house;" a plain reader, unbiassed by system, would undoubtedly suppose, that there were persons in that house capable of understanding what the Apostle addressed to them.

the more immediate objects of his concern, but they seem to have been present on this interesting occasion, as it is immediately added, “ And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.”

• But farther, consider for a moment the unscriptural inference they are constrained to draw, who maintain that this language is to be understood literally. They hold, that a real believer has a right to expect that all his children shall be partakers of the salvation of God. It is in vain to urge that many of the most eminent saints have had ungodly children. In urging such an argument it has been replied, that we should rather question the Christianity of any individual, however eminent in appearance he may be, than question the promise of God. This is, however, taking for granted, as certainly true, the very point in dispute; it is supposing, that they who thus understand this passage certainly have the right view of it, and that every character must be tried by that interpretation of it which they have thought fit to adopt. It would surely be as modest, at least, to conclude, that it is possible such a view of a divine promise, as requires us to question the Christianity of many who give the most unequivocal evidence of faith in the gospel, may be erroneous. Besides, is not such a system directly opposite to the plain testimony of Scripture, that they who received power to become the sons of God, were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of

God. According to this doctrine, they are born of blood, because a believer is entitled, not only to look for salvation to himself in connection with his faith, but also confidently to expect, in connection with it, the salvation of all his house. Such are the strange doctrines men are constrained to embrace who require such a passage to be understood literally, and not according to the scope of other passages relating to the same subject. But, if we cannot adopt the literal meaning of the words in this passage regarding the house of the jailor; if the *faith* of the household must be understood as implied, though not expressed; why not admit, when the mode of expression is precisely similar, that faith must be understood in the other case also? This, after fairly weighing the subject, appeared, in my view, to destroy the argument in favour of infant baptism, from the only case of households on which, as I formerly conceived, it could be grafted.

Eug. Well, I must take leisure to weigh your remarks; but I was going to ask you what you thought of Col. ii. 11. I think the words are, "In whom (Christ) also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the filth of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." I am aware that you may consider this passage as referring to a subject we have already very amply discussed; I mean

the connection between baptism and circumcision. But I do not think this passage was introduced in our conversation on that point; while, at the same time, it is one of the texts generally quoted in this controversy. You are not ignorant of the argument founded on it, which, I acknowledge, has always appeared to me to have a good deal of force. There is here so plain a comparison between baptism and circumcision, that it seems most natural to view the one as having come in the room of the other, and hence that they ought to be applied the same way.

Epen. I think, in a former conversation I admitted that there was a certain general resemblance between baptism and circumcision, just as there is between the Lord's supper and the passover; but that, as this general resemblance in some points does not authorise us to apply the rules regarding the observance of the passover to the ordinance that commemorates the death of Christ, so neither will it permit us to apply the regulations respecting circumcision to baptism. Nay, I pointed out some explicit instances, (such as that respecting slaves,) in which the injunctions regarding the former of these could not be applied to the latter. The only question, then, affecting the point at issue, that can occur in regard to this passage, is not, whether it contains any hint of a general resemblance between circumcision and baptism, but whether it contains any intimation that the resemblance is such, that while infants were the subjects of the one, they

ought to be also subjects of the other. Now, what tended most powerfully to shake my confidence in infant baptism was, that when I came more minutely to examine the passages usually quoted in support of it, I found they not only failed me, but several of them led to the very opposite conclusion. Of this an example occurs in the text in question. Here it will be allowed by all, that the circumcision without hands, manifested in the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, denotes what is *spiritual*, or what is elsewhere called the *circumcision of the heart*. In this passage, however, the Apostle addresses all who were baptised as partakers of this circumcision. But does not this imply, that they were capable of manifesting that they were partakers of it; in other words, that they made a profession of faith in Jesus. If all those who are addressed as buried with Christ in baptism, are represented as partaking of the circumcision without hands, (or appearing to do so, as Scripture in such cases speaks according to appearances,) it is plain that infants could not be included, as they are quite incapable of giving any indications that they are partakers of such a circumcision. Hence I conceive this passage, instead of containing any thing to favour infant baptism, may very fairly be adduced in support of the opposite side of the question, viz. as shewing that those here said to be buried with Christ in baptism, can only be considered as including those who professed the faith.

Eug. Did it never occur to you, that the general scope of the Apostle's reasoning in Gal. iii. tended a good deal to favour infant baptism?

Epen. I have often heard the language in the concluding part of that chapter quoted in support of adult baptism, and, I now think, with much propriety; but I am not aware how an argument can be drawn from this passage in favour of the opposite side of the question. What is the argument to which you allude?

Eug. It is an argument founded on the obvious and acknowledged design of the Apostle in writing this epistle. Thus, it was evidently his object to counteract the influence of the doctrines of the Judaizing teachers, who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. Now, in doing this, he reminds them of their being baptised, which he urges as rendering their circumcision unnecessary, as they had already put on Christ. Does not the scope of the Apostle's reasoning proceed on the supposition, that he considered baptism as having come in the room of circumcision, and that, therefore, as they had received the former, there was no propriety of their submitting to the latter. Besides, I have often thought, that as the Apostle states the distinctions formerly existing that are done away, this must be considered as implying that those which formerly existed, and which are not mentioned as abolished, remain. Thus, he says, ver. 28. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in

Christ Jesus." Does not this seem to imply, that, though these are abolished, the relation between parent and child still remains?

Epen. I see the argument you conceive contained in this passage, proceeds on the supposed substitution of baptism in the room of circumcision. My objections to any argument, for infant baptism founded on such a supposition, I stated formerly. What the points of resemblance between the two institutions are, we learn from attending to the account given in Scripture of each. It is in this way, also, we learn what are the points of difference. This appears the great defect of this analogical reasoning; it confounds the points of resemblance with the points of diversity. Thus, I learn from the plain language of Scripture, that circumcision is to be applied to an adult on his first professing faith in the God of Abraham. I also learn, from the same source, that baptism is to be applied to every one on his first professing faith in Jesus. The resemblance here, I discover from the distinct account given of each institution. But I farther learn, that circumcision is to be applied to male infants eight days old. From the language of the institution respecting baptism, on the other hand, I find it is to be applied to those who are taught, and profess to believe. Here, then, is the inaccuracy into which we have fallen. Because, on comparing the accounts of these two institutions, we find one point in which they agree, we have incautiously, and I think falsely, inferred, they must agree in others, where the

language of the respective institutions not only intimates no such agreement, but leads to the very opposite conclusion. But as I have been led to examine this iii. chapter of the epistle to the Galatians with some attention in the course of my enquiries, I should like to have your opinion of the view I have taken of it. If you will favour me with a Bible, or rather a Greek Testament, if you have one at hand, I shall be able, in a very short time, to give you what I apprehend to be the scope of the Apostle's reasoning, in so far, at least, as it regards the point in question.

It was manifestly the design of the Apostle to caution the churches of Galatia against being imposed upon by those Judaizing teachers, who wished to establish the necessity of the Gentiles being circumcised, and thus, by adding circumcision to the atonement of Christ, trenched on the doctrine of justification by faith.

Ver. 2. it is asked, "Received ye the spirit by works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Here *receiving the spirit* is represented as the grand distinguishing feature of Christianity, the great object attained; and the question is, how they had attained it, viz. by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Ver. 5. The same question is repeated respecting those that ministered the spirit and wrought miracles.

Ver. 6. and 7. "As Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, so ye know that they who are of faith (or believers)

are the children of Abraham." Here remark, that having the spirit, and having righteousness imputed, are used as synonymous terms. Abraham's having righteousness imputed to him by faith, is mentioned as an example of the spirit being given by faith; and those who resembled Abraham in this respect are represented as his spiritual children, and as those who had received the spirit through faith.

Ver. 8. But not only was Abraham himself justified through faith, but farther, "the Scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the nations (as distinguished from the Jews) by faith, announced the good news before, saying, that in thee shall all the nations be blessed." You will observe, it is the same word in the original which is, in our translation, rendered *heathen* and *nations* in this verse. It ought plainly to be rendered the same way in both places, to shew more clearly how the quotation confirms the point for which it is introduced. Here, too, being blessed is synonymous with being justified through faith.

Ver. 9. As this justification of the Gentiles, then, was so clearly stated in ancient Scripture; it follows, that "those who are of faith, or who believe, are blessed with believing Abraham." Thus, what was testified respecting Abraham personally, and what the Scriptures had before declared respecting the way in which the nations were to be blessed, corresponded with what they knew from experience, viz. that they received the spirit through faith. The scope of the Apostle's

reasoning here is precisely similar to what he brings forward in Rom. iv. He there shews that Abraham was justified as a believer *before* he was circumcised, and hence justification could not depend on circumcision. In like manner here we learn, 1. That Abraham had righteousness imputed to him simply as a believer. 2. That the Scriptures intimated that the nations who were not circumcised were to be justified by faith, when that promise was given to Abraham, "In thee shall all the *nations* be blessed." Hence, 3d, individuals now belonging to the nations, who, like Abraham, believe, are, like him, justified by their faith, though they resemble him when he was first justified, in being uncircumcised.

Ver. 10—13. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them. But that no one is justified by the law before God, is manifest, for the just shall live by faith. But the law is not of faith; but the man that doth these things shall live by them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." In these verses the Apostle shews, that when he speaks of justification, and being blessed, he speaks of what could have no connection with the law; because, from the nature of the threatening contained in the law, we must expect not a blessing, but a curse. Besides, the language of the Old Testa-

ment Scriptures, as quoted from the prophet Habbakuk, shews, that the just were to live not by the law, but by faith.

Ver. 14. But Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, “that (in this way, or by the redemption thus purchased,) the blessing of Abraham might come to the nations *in* Christ Jesus; that (in other words) we might receive the promised spirit through faith.” Now what is the blessing of Abraham here? It appears manifestly to be the specific blessing promised to Abraham, ver. 8, viz. “that in him all the nations should be blessed.” By Christ redeeming men from the curse of the law, this blessing promised in behalf of the nations to Abraham, was fulfilled in Christ. It is not of much importance to our argument, whether we consider the phrase *that we might receive the spirit*, as strictly synonymous with, the blessing of Abraham coming on men, or as an immediate and necessary consequence of that blessing. Perhaps, accurately speaking, the bestowment of the spirit ought to be considered as the *effect* of the mediation of Jesus. “When I go away, I will send the comforter.”—“If I go not away, the comforter will not come.” But it was an effect necessarily connected with it; and the personal participation of the spirit stands, in like manner, in a close and indissoluble connection with the individual believing in the Saviour. Here I may remark in passing, that I have often heard this expression, “the blessing of Abraham is now come on the Gentiles,” quoted in admi-

nistering infant baptism, nay, I have frequently done it myself, supposing that it referred to that promise, "I will be a God to thee and thy seed," and that, of course, spiritual blessings were now promised to the seed of believers. From a more minute attention to the passage, however, I am now fully convinced, that it is not to this promise there is here any reference; but that the Apostle's language refers to a totally different promise, viz. that which regards *that seed* in which all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. That thus, by the blessing of Abraham coming on the Gentiles, is meant, that the blessing promised to Abraham respecting the promised seed, is now come to the nations, seeing salvation is now preached through the faith of Jesus, to men of every land. This view of the import of this expression renders the illustration of this passage quite *unique*, which it would not be, if we were to suppose there was a reference here to another promise, not mentioned in the context.

Ver. 16. "Now *in* Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not and *in* seeds; as referring to many, but as referring to one, but *in* thy seed, which is Christ." This verse has often been represented as relating to God's promise to Abraham, Gen. xvii. "I will be a God to thee and thy seed in their generations;" but it has plainly no connection with that promise. Nay, what is asserted here is totally inapplicable to that promise, because that promise was not made to *seed* as of one, but to *seeds*, the expres-

sion *in their generations* including many. The promise here referred to, is the specific promise mentioned in the preceding context, ver. 8. "In thee shall all the nations be blessed." This promise was given at different times, and hence the expression is used here in the plural, the *promises*. As at one time, also, it is simply said, *in thee* shall all the nations be blessed, while at another the expression is, *in thy seed*, &c. the Apostle here does not adhere strictly to the particular form of the promise, ver. 8, but refers to the other form of the same promise, as perfectly synonymous. From *ἐν σοι*, being used ver. 8., and *ἐν χριστῷ*, ver. 14, it seems most natural, and quite legitimate, to supply *ἐν* before *τῷ Ἀβραάμ, τῷ σπέρματι*, and *τοῖς σπέρμασιν*, ver. 16.; reading it as I have proposed, thus, the promises were given *in Abraham*, and *in thy seed*; (viz. when it was said *in thee* and *in thy seed* shall all the nations be blessed,) he saith not, and *in seeds*, as referring to many, but as referring to one, and *in thy seed*, which is Christ.

Ver. 17. "And this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed by God *with respect to Christ*, (See *εἰς* used in the same way, Luke vii. 30. Rom. xvi. 19.) the law, which took place four hundred and thirty years afterwards, could not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect." Observe here the promise is used in the singular number, while in the former verse it was used in the plural. This confirms the propriety of what we have stated, viz. that the plural form there

used does not refer to different promises, but to the same promise mentioned at different times. The only promise that can be referred to in this 17th verse, is the promise respecting Abraham and his seed being the channel through which all the nations should be blessed. Formerly *faith* was opposed to the law; here *the promise* is opposed to it. This denotes that what is of faith, and what is of promise, are used as convertible terms. The reason is obvious. What is of promise is to be received by faith; while the law, which is contrasted with the promise, is equally contrasted with faith, because it implies, that if any blessing be obtained by it, it must be obtained by works, in opposition to faith, and viewed as a claim of debt, as opposed to a subject of promise.

Ver. 18. "For if the inheritance were of the law, it would be no more of promise, for God gave it to Abraham by promise." Here, the inheritance is the same with the blessing which was given to Abraham freely as a matter of promise, and was received personally by him by faith, and must be so received by all his spiritual seed.

Ver. 19. The Apostle in this and the following verse digresses, and answers an objection that might be stated respecting the use of the law being given at all. "Wherefore, then, serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come *in* whom the promise was made, and was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator." I supply *ev* before *ω*, as in ver. 16. The promise no doubt referred to Christ, but it

was as *in* him, viewing him as the channel of communication, it is here mentioned; *in* thy seed shall all nations be blessed. It is not necessary for our present argument, to enquire particularly into the view here given of the law.

Ver. 21, 22. "Was the law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid. For if a law had been given which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law. But the Scripture hath shut up all under sin, (here the Scripture and the law are used almost synonymously, as the Apostle refers to the Old Testament Scriptures, in which the law is recorded,) that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Here observe the promise formerly mentioned was, that in Abraham and his seed all the nations should be blessed. This blessing, called the inheritance, ver. 18. was received by Abraham personally by faith, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." It had formerly been said, "they who are of faith, (*i. e.* who believe,) are the children of Abraham, and they who believe are blessed with believing Abraham," ver. 7. and 9.; in like manner, here again the promise, (or the blessing promised,) by the faith of Jesus Christ, (through the channel of believing in him,) is given to them who thus believe. As Abraham's personal faith is represented as the channel through which he had righteousness imputed to him, so it is particularly deserving of notice, that they who are called his children, ver. 7, must *believe*

the same promise, that they may be partakers of the same blessedness.

Ver. 23, 24, 25. "For before that faith came, we were under the law, shut up until the faith that was to be revealed; so that the law was our schoolmaster *until* Christ, (the same word as in the former verse, and if it is rendered *until* in the one, it should be so in the other; that it should be so, appears from the expression *ὡς ἕως*, in ver. 25, which plainly refers to time,) that we might be justified by faith." Faith here, perhaps, most naturally refers to the gospel, or truth believed; but this cannot be separated, in this argument, from the belief of it. The reason why we would thus understand the expression in this place, is derived from ver. 25. "But faith being come, (*i. e.* the gospel being revealed, or the faith that was to be revealed, as it is called ver. 23,) we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

Ver. 26, 27. "For ye are all the sons of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. As many as have been baptised unto Christ, have put on Christ." Here you will particularly notice, being the sons of God by faith, being baptised unto Christ, and putting on Christ, are expressions all manifestly applied to the same persons.

Ver. 28. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, but ye are all one in Christ Jesus." The same *all* are addressed here as in ver. 26. and 27.; *i. e.* all who were the sons of God

by faith, were baptised unto Christ, and had put on Christ, were all one in Christ Jesus.

Ver. 29. The conclusion from the whole is, "If then ye are Christ's, (*i. e.* by faith,) then truly are ye Abraham's seed, (not in the sense of the promised seed, which was one, ver. 16, and which excludes plurality, but in the sense in which believers are called the sons of Abraham, ver. 7,) and heirs according to promise," (or interested in the inheritance given to Abraham by promise, and which he received as you now have done by faith.)

Such, I conceive, is the genuine scope of the Apostle's reasoning in this passage, and you will easily see how, in my opinion, it strongly militates against the doctrine of infant baptism. While it speaks of all that were baptised unto Christ as the children of God by faith, and as having put on Christ, it is surely impossible to conceive these expressions applicable to any but those who were capable of making a personal profession.

But I had almost forgotten to notice your remark on ver. 28, that it is not there added there is neither parent nor child. I do not think any inference can be drawn from this, that can at all have a reference to infant baptism. The Apostle is here speaking of *distinctions* that formerly existed; thus, the Jews were circumcised, and had all the privileges of the peculiar people, not so the Greeks; the free had certain privileges which the bond had not; the male partook of the seal of

the covenant, not the female. Now if we speak of parents and children, it is not a *distinction*, like those mentioned, but a *relation*: the seal of the covenant was formerly applied to the child as well as the parent. Would it be good reasoning to say, that because the *relation* of a child to his parent is not introduced, where the Apostle is speaking of quite a different subject, viz. the *distinctions* which formerly existed being now done away, therefore we are to infer, that, under the New Testament dispensation, infants are to be baptised, seeing they were circumcised under the Old. In such reasoning, the premises would certainly have no connection with the conclusion. Besides, I think quite a different inference might have been drawn, if, in such a connection, the words *neither parent nor child* had been added. You will observe both parties, in the former classes, are now in Christ. Both Jews and Greeks, &c. are in him; and had the Apostle made this addition, would we not have reasoned, both parents and children are in him likewise. Hence this might have been very naturally turned to an argument for infant baptism. But here all that are mentioned are such as are capable of being addressed; “Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” In such a connection, we surely could not expect children to be noticed at all.

Your mentioning the general scope of this passage, and what, it occurred to you, might be inferred from it, recalls to my mind another passage, the general design of which has often ap-

peared to me very unfavourable to the doctrine of infant baptism. I refer to Acts, chap. xv. In it, you will recollect, we have an account of the dispute that took place at Antioch, respecting the necessity of the Gentiles being circumcised. The subject was laid before the church at Jerusalem, and there it underwent a discussion, and received a decision; which decision we have recorded. Now, it has often occurred to me, if baptism came in the room of circumcision, as is pleaded, what would have more effectually silenced every objection, than to say, though the Gentiles are not now to be circumcised, they partake of an ordinance which is altogether equivalent to it; which, like it, embraces both parents and their infant offspring; nay, which extends farther, as it includes females, which the other did not. If on any occasion we could have expected such an argument to have been introduced, it is here; it would have been so much calculated to remove prejudice, and to silence every objection. You well know, however, that no comparison between baptism and circumcision, and no hint that the latter supplied the place of the former, is to be found, even where, had this been the Apostles' view of the matter, it would have been so obviously to their purpose, and so completely have removed all the objections that could have occurred to the most scrupulous, on the point to which their decree related.

Eug. Nothing immediately occurs to me which I could object to the view you have given of this

chapter in the Galatians; but there is one passage more, which, though baptism is not particularly mentioned in it, may be considered as bearing a good deal on this subject; and which I have always viewed, and, you well know, has been generally adduced, as having a very favourable aspect to the baptism of infants. It is in the epistle to the Romans, xi. chapter, where the Apostle speaks of the Jews being broken off, and the Gentiles being grafted in. I should like to know how you dispose of this passage.

Epen. What do you conceive to be the argument from that portion of Scripture in favour of infant baptism?

Eug. I view it thus.—When the Apostle compares the unbelieving Jews to the branches of the good olive which were broken off, and the Gentiles to branches from the wild olive that are now grafted into the stock of the good olive, the figure is calculated to represent the church of God as one all along; that it is the same church that continues now that existed formerly; that it is to this church the Gentiles are added. That, of course, the figure would naturally lead us to infer, that, if the appendages of these branches, the children, were formerly in the church, they ought to continue in it still. Nay, it is added, the branches that were cut off, are to be grafted in again. Now, if this be true, surely the branches that were cut off, denoted parents along with their children. If it be the same that are to be grafted in again, of course, when the Jews are

converted, will not they be received along with their children. Indeed, it has been remarked, that the denial of infant baptism, seems to throw a stumbling block in the way of the conversion of the Jews, as they must naturally revolt at any system so unlike that which they have been accustomed to, in which children are admitted to the same privileges with their parents.

Epen. I acknowledge this appears to me a very circuitous kind of argument in favour of baptising infants. I think we should naturally be led to look for some very different kind of evidence in support of a positive institution from a mere inference drawn from the figurative language of Scripture. But, admitting that there was nothing exceptionable in the general nature of the argument, there appear to me very material objections to its validity. Like some other arguments of a similar nature, which we have already talked of, if pursued to its legitimate consequences, it would carry us by much too far. Thus, if we suppose, that because the one class of branches in this figure is represented as coming in the room of the other, that, therefore, all the appendages of the one belong to the other, we must not only bring in all the children of converted Gentiles, but, as I formerly noticed, all their slaves; and we must not only admit the children to baptism, but, on the same principle, admit them to the Lord's table. Few, however, would think of carrying the argument this length, though there appears not a doubt, that this pas-

sage furnishes as fair an argument for these practices, as it does for infant baptism. Again, is it alleged, that if you abridge the privileges of Christians by depriving their offspring of the seal of the covenant, you will thus throw a stumbling block in the way of the Jews: I reply, will you not throw a similar stumbling block in their way, by not admitting these children to the Lord's supper, seeing the event it commemorates is so directly compared to the passover of old, of which all the members of a Jewish family were allowed to participate? It may add, perhaps, a little to the plausibility of an argument, to speak of this or the other doctrine or practice of the Christian church strengthening the prejudices of the Jews; but it is a false alarm. When they come to embrace Jesus as the Messiah, they will be willing to take his religion as it stands; they will see in various points that it is very different from their ancient œconomy; they will perceive from their own prophecies, that they had reason to expect it would be so; they must be willing to learn that the kingdom of Jesus is a spiritual kingdom, and that his subjects are spiritual worshippers.

But the radical error of this argument appears to me to consist in a perversion of the figurative language of Scripture. Here the word *branches* is plainly applied exclusively to those who are moral agents. This is manifest from the one class of branches being cut off because of *unbelief*, and the other branches which were grafted in standing by *faith*. The Apostle evidently had in his eye no

other class of human beings, but those who were capable of believing, or of being guilty of unbelief. But because, according to the figure here used, branches have twigs, and these may naturally enough represent the connection between parents and children, therefore it is alleged, these last must be supposed to be included in the figure too. Now, this is what I would call a very false and dangerous mode of criticism; it is impossible to say to what lengths of extravagance it would, in some cases, lead. It is like applying every part of a parable, while many parts belong to what may, with propriety, be called the drapery of the parable, and were never intended to have any specific application at all. It is somewhat like endeavouring to find out a spiritual meaning to the shoes and the ring, in the parable of the prodigal son, which every sober interpreter will consider as not intended to have any specific allusion, but merely an appendage to the story.

This argument derives its only origin then from this false way of interpreting the figurative language of Scripture; and, as we have seen, were we to adopt it, it would carry us too far. The subjects the Apostle is treating of in this passage are, the fall of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles in their room, and the subsequent restoration of the Jewish nation. While he looks forward to the reviving prospect of a number of the peculiar people yet partaking of the blessings of the gospel, he says, "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall

the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches." Now the first fruit and the root here seem plainly to mean the fathers of the Jewish nation, to whom the promise of the Messiah was given: Abraham more especially may be considered as meant, who so eminently manifested his holiness by his faith in God.

It is said, ver. 17. "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree: Boast not against the branches; but if thou boastest, thou barest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear." The 17th verse furnishes, I think, the true key to this passage. *Some* of the branches were broken off; this implies that *some* remained. Here, then, are two classes of branches that originally belonged to the good olive tree. Now, who are denoted by the branches broken off? The unbelieving Jews, as in ver. 20. "because of *unbelief* they were broken off." They are those described as *Israel*, from their composing the majority, or rather the general body of the nation: thus, ver. 7. it is said, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh, but the election hath obtained it." The other branches that remained connected with the

good olive, and partaking of the root, are the believing Jews. They belonged to the same class with the seven thousand men who did not bow the knee to Baal, in the time of Elias, ver. 4.; and included Paul himself, ver. 1.; and those called the election, ver. 6., or the spiritual worshippers at the time at which Paul lived. These are plainly the same with those mentioned in the gospel by John, chap. i. 12., and contrasted with the general body of their countrymen, in a similar manner as here. They are thus described, “as many as received him (Christ), to them he gave power to become the sons of God; even to them that believe on his name, who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Now, will it be said, that the children of the spiritual worshippers in the days of Elias were necessarily like their parents, or that the children of those denominated the election, also belonged to the elect? Surely not. This would be quite in opposition to the distinction the evangelist makes between being born of blood, &c. and being born of God. You will remark, then, that when the Gentiles, the branches of the wild olive, were grafted in, they were inserted among the branches that remained, (i. e. they ranked with the believing Jews,) by *faith*. But does not this clearly imply, that all these branches denoted spiritual worshippers; that, like the branches among which they were grafted, they represented those who were born not of the flesh, but of God; or,

according to another figure, that they became Abraham's spiritual seed, by their resemblance to the father of the faithful; in other words, by their believing like him, and their faith, like his, being imputed to them for righteousness. If these branches, then, were such as stood by faith, they can refer to spiritual worshippers, and none else. But if they thus rank with those Jews denominated the election, if election does not descend by birth, but if those who partake of it are such as have received Christ, and are born not of the flesh, but of God: then, surely, it would be quite in opposition to the plain tenor of Scripture, if we say that the spiritual worshippers among the Gentiles, though ranked with the believing Jews, merely on account of their personal faith, must have those associated with them who are merely born of the flesh; who are totally incapable of faith, or of partaking of those spiritual privileges which the election enjoy only through believing.

Allow me to repeat, then, what I conceive to be the radical error of the criticism by which an argument is drawn from this passage in support of infant baptism. The whole argument proceeds on the *fallacious* supposition, that the Apostle cannot contrast the character and conduct of adult Jews, who are moral agents, with that of Gentiles of the same description, without including the infants of both, who are not moral agents. But, I conceive, on this passage we may even go a little farther, and say, not only is there no allusion to children here, but the reasoning is such,

that children cannot be included. The Apostle is only speaking of those who are capable of believing, or being guilty of unbelief. Hence, if we attend to his argument, so far is it from countenancing infant baptism, that it may, perhaps, fairly be viewed as leading to the very opposite conclusion. Thus; the branches broken off, represented those Jews separated on account of the personal guilt of *unbelief*; the branches grafted in, denoted those Gentiles who *believed*, as they stood by faith. Would it not be a plain inference from this figurative language, that they only of the Gentiles became partakers of the root who were capable of faith; in other words, those who professed faith were alone considered as the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Thus nothing has tended more I confess to shake my confidence in the doctrine of infant baptism, than to find that the passages on which I was formerly accustomed, in a considerable measure, to rest its defence, upon more minute examination, not only failed me, but actually appeared to support the opposite side of the question. What could I do, my dear friend, but surrender, when I found the phalanx to which I looked for support, not only deserting me, but actually moving over to the lines of the enemy?

I think I have already noticed the argument you draw from this passage in favour of infant baptism, from the supposition that, if the posterity of Christians were not admitted to partake of baptism, it would tend much to excite the op-

position of the Jews. When you mentioned this, I could not avoid being struck with the coincidence between the substance of this objection, and what really was an important part of the controversy between the carnal Jews and the Lord Jesus, during his personal ministry. They valued themselves on their being the natural seed of Abraham. Our Lord all along opposes the idea of this being any solid ground of satisfaction to them, while they were strangers to the faith and character of Abraham. This, by the way, is a strong confirmation to me, that circumcision was never intended to be a seal of spiritual blessings to the individual who received it. Is not the whole of our Lord's reasoning, then, with the Jews, intended to remove the idea, that spiritual blessings were at all conveyed in the channel of natural posterity, and to impress the conviction, that it was only such as had the faith of Abraham, whether Jews or Gentiles, who were to be treated as his spiritual seed, and as interested in those spiritual blessings which were to flow through the promised Messiah.

Perhaps the case may be shortly stated thus.—Jehovah was pleased to appoint the seal or memorial of the way in which men were to be justified, to be administered to the infant posterity of the Jewish nation. This the Lord Jesus found the Jews perverted, by resting in this sign and in their natural descent from Abraham. While on earth, he warned his countrymen against this perversion, reminding them;

that their being the natural descendants of Abraham, and their being circumcised, was of no avail unless they had the faith of Abraham. He moreover appointed the sign of introduction into his spiritual kingdom to be given in such a way as appeared not liable to a similar perversion, by its being required to be connected with a profession of faith in his name. In order, however, to make things tally, in the spiritual kingdom of Christ, with the state of things among the Jews, many Christians are disposed, not only to apply the ordinance of baptism (surely I may say without either precept or example,) to their offspring in a state of infancy; but also, like the Jews, to claim for them certain peculiar blessings, not merely those that naturally result from superior external advantages, and arise from early instruction, but blessings supposed to belong to them simply as the seed of believers. It really, I think, deserves particular enquiry, if this be not the same error into which the Jews fell during our Lord's personal ministry, and which his public teaching was so uniformly intended to counteract; if it be not like going back to what the Apostle calls beggarly elements, and which he so much condemns in some of the early churches.

Eug. I was going to catechise you a little farther respecting your objections to baptising infants, and particularly to enquire what you think of the argument in support of this practice, from the history of the primitive churches. I recollect

reading *Wall's History of Infant Baptism* some years ago, and it struck me as containing undeniable evidence that the practice existed at a very early period, at least. But, as it is getting late, I fear I have encroached upon your time too much already.

Epen. My dear friend, it is I, rather, that should make an apology for encroaching upon yours. The remarks I had to make on some of the passages to which we have had occasion to refer, have occupied more time than I was aware of; but, as you have had the goodness to hear me so far, if you would name one other evening, I should be happy to state to you what has occurred to me respecting this argument from antiquity.

Eug. Most cheerfully; but, as I am engaged next week, if you think you could call the week following, on the Tuesday evening at the same hour, I shall be happy to see you.

Epen. It will give me much pleasure to wait on you.

CONVERSATION V.

On the argument from antiquity...How far those who urge it act consistently....Some general principles that ought to regulate our enquiries into Divine truth....The object in view in publishing these Conversations.

Epen. Good evening, Eugenio. So we are to have another night's conversation on baptism, a subject which has given occasion to so much controversy. As the discussion, however, has been conducted between us, it has not as yet partaken much of its controversial character.

Eug. The less of the spirit of controversy, my dear friend, so much the better. Indeed, I believe, it generally happens, that where two individuals discuss by themselves a subject on which they differ, they seldom find room for those lengthened controversies which take place when they argue in the presence of others. Such endless disputations, I am persuaded, frequently arise from that desire of victory, which more or less infects the minds even of the best. If two of the keenest controversialists were dropped in a desert, though they might not entirely agree, their disputes would sooner, at least, come to an end. As we have already conversed on most of the topics connected with the argument respecting in-

fant baptism, I think we may this evening talk over any that remain. That we may lose no time, however, we shall resume the discussion where we left off. If I recollect right, I had just asked, before we parted, what you thought of the argument from antiquity. Ever since I read *Wall's History of Infant Baptism*, though, at this distance, I do not recollect the particular testimonies, there has remained a strong impression on my mind, that the evidence in proof of the early existence, nay, of the early general prevalence of this practice, is quite irresistible. Now if this be admitted, it has always appeared to me a strong and fair argument, that we cannot well suppose the primitive Christians could be ignorant of the practice of the Apostles in regard to this ordinance; and that we must ascribe it to the observance of infant baptism by them, that it is recorded to have existed at so early a period in the Christian church.

Epen. I have also read the author you mention on this part of the argument. But, after all I have seen, I am a good deal disposed to acquiesce in the opinion of two late writers, who will not be suspected of being prejudiced against infant baptism, who remark, that "on this as well as on other subjects, the study of antiquity is an inextricable maze; and to consult what are called the fathers, is to ask counsel at an oracle, whose response is usually of ambiguous import."* Some

* See Bogue's and Bennet's *History of Dissenters*, vol. I. p. 144.

of the testimonies brought forward in support of the very early existence of infant baptism appear to me a good deal forced ; while I think it has been clearly shewn, that, if you come down to the period when the evidence of its existence and prevalence is quite unquestionable, you find other practices, which we all now discard as quite superstitious, mentioned on the same authority. Consistency, then, would require, that if, on such grounds as the testimony of antiquity, we adopt the one, we should not discard the other.

But, farther, there seems to me something very objectionable to the whole of this argument, drawn from the practices recorded by the fathers. What happened in the Apostolic age itself is not much calculated to strengthen our confidence in the zeal and caution with which the early churches would observe all the Apostolic institutions, and guard against any deviation from them. Let us recollect the abuses which so early crept into the church at Corinth, and which Paul so sharply reprovcs in his first epistle to that church. In like manner, though the attachment the Galatians expressed to the same Apostle was so strong, that, in his own emphatic words, they would have plucked out their own eyes and have given them to him, you no doubt remember how soon they listened to another gospel, and insisted on the necessity of circumcision to justification. To these cases let us add the accounts given of the state of the Asiatic churches, Rev. ii. and iii., before the Apostolic age had expired. These instances, as

well as others, shew us how very prone the early Christians were to deviate from the simplicity both of the doctrines taught, and the ordinances enjoined, by the Apostles of our Lord. If to these examples, found existing during the Apostolic age itself, we add the express assurance Paul hath given us, that the spirit of Antichrist had even then begun to work, I acknowledge I could not place much reliance on the argument in favour of infant baptism from antiquity, even were the existence of the practice at an early period much more decidedly established than it is.

Let me here suppose for a moment, (and surely the supposition is very admissible,) that the doctrine of the Judaizing teachers, requiring the believing Gentiles to be circumcised, had not been introduced till after the apostolic age, and consequently had not been noticed in the sacred writings; I appeal to yourself if the same argument from antiquity might not have been used in support of this practice which is now urged for infant baptism. It might have been pleaded, that it could be traced up to the age immediately after the Apostles, and was it possible to conceive that those who lived so near the time of the Apostles did not know what was their practice? They must surely have known that the Apostles practised the circumcision of believing Gentiles, otherwise those who immediately succeeded them never would have thought of it.—In this case then we have a decisive proo-

that though we could trace up a practice, not merely to the age immediately after the Apostles, but to the Apostolic age itself, yet this would furnish us with no evidence that it was agreeable to their authority, unless we could learn this from their own writings. One use we are unquestionably called to make of the early deviations from the Apostolic doctrine and practice recorded in Scripture is, to make us cleave more closely to the inspired writings as the only rule of faith and obedience, and to render us less inclined to lean to human interpretations of them, even at the earliest period of the church of Christ.

There is no proposition in which I should feel myself, at first sight, more powerfully constrained to acquiesce, than this, "that in cases in which every simple and unlettered Christian is immediately called to act, and in which he is bound to act in faith, we are to expect explicit direction from the Scriptures themselves." To me it would appear an impeachment of the divine wisdom, nay, I may add, of the divine justice also, to suppose that plain Christians are to learn from the ancient fathers the way in which they are to observe an ordinance of Christ. The sacred volume is that which all Christians have in their hands; it is to this alone they are bound to appeal; and it is where they deviate from this, that, learned or unlearned, they are guilty. If I cannot find any particular doctrine or practice in Scripture, I could have no confidence in it, though I could unquestionably trace it up to the remotest antiquity. If I

in any measure substituted the usages of the fathers in the room of Scriptural authority, I should dread incurring the awful denunciation with which the book of Revelation concludes, "If any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book." Antiquity may furnish us with fresh illustrations of doctrines which we *previously* know to be contained in Scripture; or may afford us examples of the observance of institutions which the Scriptures previously enjoin. But we must have the basis of all that we believe or practise in the word of God itself. If we have not, whatever superstructure we build on discoveries with which we suppose antiquity furnishes us, we may rest assured we are building on the sand.

Eug. In the last part of what you have just remarked, you have suggested the only length I ever thought of carrying the argument derived from the early existence of the practice of infant baptism. I view it thus:—Here is a point in which there is a certain degree of difficulty in ascertaining what is enjoined in Scripture, I mean whether the children of believers are to partake of Christian baptism or not; I therefore enquire, what practice on this subject prevailed among those who lived nearest the times of the Apostles, and who, of course, had access to know the way in which they acted. In this case, I do not lay stress on the authority of the fathers, I merely avail myself of their testimony, so far as it goes, to ascertain, in a doubtful point, what was the

practice of the Apostles themselves. It is still to them I ultimately appeal; and I think there is a great deal of truth in what Mr Walker of Dublin has remarked, that we are not to reject any information which is calculated to illustrate Scripture, merely because we do not immediately derive it from the sacred volume. If, as he observes, (I do not pretend to quote his words,) we learn even from a heathen historian, that crucifixion was a punishment inflicted only on slaves, though I receive the information through such a channel, it tends to illustrate the ignominious nature of the manner in which the Saviour was put to death.

Epen. It occurs to me that this mode of using antiquity proceeds on an assumption in which I cannot acquiesce, viz. that it really is left a doubtful matter in Scripture, whether infants ought to be baptised or not. Now, this I conceive is a dangerous principle. I most readily allow that the best of men have differed on the subject, but this difference, I think, we must admit to have arisen, not from any defect in the Scripture, but from the influence of early prejudice and education, either on the one side or the other, at least; or from something having been plausibly interwoven with the argument, which does not properly belong to it. As on this question there must be a right and a wrong, I have no doubt that Scripture fixes which side is right; and it is by perseveringly examining the testimony of the sacred volume in regard to it, that the truth is to be ascertained.

With regard to Mr Walker's remark, I have no hesitation, to a certain extent at least, in admitting it. I should gladly receive an illustration of Scripture from any quarter. But it does not appear to me relevant to the point at issue. The question is not, whether I am to take an illustration of Scripture from such information as I may receive through another channel respecting the usages of ancient times? But; am I to suppose, in a matter where every Christian is immediately called to act, and where he must act in faith, that Scripture has left such indefinite directions, that we must be guided by information derived from a source to which the great body of Christians have no access? I may admire the language of epic poetry, and the elegant allusions that are often found in it; but I should not expect a wise lawgiver to enact those laws in that language, which are intended for regulating the conduct of the general body of the people. In like manner, I think a little attention to this subject, will lead us to draw a very obvious line of distinction between those illustrations of particular passages of Scripture which we may derive from an acquaintance with ancient usages, and which, though highly gratifying to those who have access to this kind of information, is certainly not necessary to regulate either our faith or practice: and those represented as in some measure necessary to be known, in order to regulate our conduct, in a case where every Christian, learned or unlearned, is immediately called to act.

Of the propriety of admitting the former class of illustrations, I have no doubt; but I cannot admit the latter; that is, I cannot admit that we are at all to depend on any information from the ancient fathers, (a source of information open to comparatively so few,) for direction regarding our procedure, in cases where every Christian is immediately called to obey the will of God. The principle I conceive to be a dangerous one, for it must be founded on the supposition, that the Scriptures themselves do not furnish a sufficient rule; that, in short, to learn how in a certain case we are to act, we are to leave an infallible rule, to which all have access, nay, and by which all are to be judged; and learn our duty from a fallible rule, to which few have access; which, after the most minute enquiry, leaves us in the same state of uncertainty in which it found us; which none are bound to know; and ignorance of which can, of course, involve us in no blame.

I cannot here avoid remarking in passing, the very striking similarity between the conduct of those who thus urge the testimony of the fathers in favour of infant baptism, and that of the Jews on the one hand, and the abettors of Popish superstition on the other. The modern Jews refer to their Mishnah, containing their oral or traditional law, as the medium through which we are to understand the written law of Moses. Roman Catholics introduce the traditions and practices of the church, as essentially necessary to explain the import of the Scriptures; and here, in

like manner, we have the practices of the fathers referred to, as instructing us regarding the subjects of Christian baptism.

But my meaning in some of these observations will be best explained by an example, and I shall select the one you have mentioned. I learn from an ancient heathen writer, that the punishment of crucifixion was only inflicted on slaves among the Romans; that it was considered too ignominious to be applied to a Roman citizen. This, no doubt, furnishes me with a very striking illustration of the ignominious manner in which the Lord Jesus was put to death. But the knowledge of this fact, which I derive from this heathen author, is by no means necessary to me as a Christian. I might have remained entirely ignorant of it, and no part of my faith or duty would have been at all affected by that ignorance. The case, however, is materially different with regard to Christian baptism. Here every individual is called to act, and he must act in faith. Respect for the Scriptures, then, as a perfect rule, compels me to conclude, there must be full directions, in this matter; (whether I have found them out or not,) in these Scriptures themselves. I dare not look for direction from another quarter, because I am sure, in the first place, it was never the design of the great lawgiver that I should; and, secondly, because I know that fallibility and uncertainty is stamped on every other source of information. But, by the way, did it never occur to you, that those who argue

from the authority of the fathers in support of infant baptism, as it is universally practised among us at least, are chargeable with great inconsistency?

Eug. In what respect?

Epen. In departing from the *mode* of baptism which is universally allowed to have been practised by the early Christians. This, you know, was immersion.

Eug. The truth is, the particular *mode* of administering baptism, never appeared to me so important a branch of this enquiry, as that which regards the subjects of this ordinance. But, are not some cases quoted in the writings of the fathers, in which sprinkling was used?

Epen. If I recollect right, on some occasions, in cases of sickness, this was allowed; but, with this exception, it is, I think, universally admitted, that immersion was employed. I did not mean, in noticing this, to compare in point of importance the enquiry regarding the *mode*, with that which refers to the *subjects* of baptism. I am much disposed to take the same view of that matter which you do. I merely notice the inconsistency in professedly reasoning from antiquity, while that authority is only partially followed. I must confess, if I looked to the writings of the early fathers, as affording me a just view of the Apostolic practice respecting the one of these points, I should feel myself in consistency bound equally to admit their authority as furnishing me with direction in regard to the other.

Eug. Well, after all you have said, you must excuse me, if I express my regret at the difficulties you have experienced on this subject. For my own part, I have long thought, that a difference of sentiment on this point ought, of all others to be made a matter of forbearance among Christians ; so many plausible things can be said on both sides of the question. When I say, that where a difference of opinion has subsisted on this subject, a very inordinate stress has been laid upon it, I consider the charge as equally applicable to the one party as to the other. But you know the prejudices of men's minds in this country, against any who would question the doctrine of infant baptism ; and as it is merely an external rite, and not affecting any particular Christian doctrine, when I think how much it may diminish your usefulness, I cannot but regret the scruples you entertain. It has frequently occurred to me, that there is a great danger of Christians directing their attention too much to merely external institutions, and, while they do so, neglecting (as our Lord expresses it) the weightier matters of the law. This appears to be very much the case in the present day ; nay, it is, perhaps, one of the most prominent features in the history of the times. It is manifest, however, that Paul did not lay so much stress upon baptism as some now do, when he says to the Corinthians, " I thank God I baptised none of you but Crispus and Gaius ;" and declares, that " Christ sent him not to baptise, but to preach the gospel." Be-

sides, is there not a danger of indulging what I may call a too great squeamishness of mind? There is such a thing as too scrupulous a conscience, which boggles at every difficulty, and prevents the person who possesses it from ever being at rest. Now, it is an important feature of a well-regulated mind, to give every part of truth its due weight, and not to assign to one part of it a greater measure of attention than its relative importance demands. Besides, I need hardly remark to you, the impression which a change of sentiment, on such a subject as this, gives of a certain fickleness of mind, which has the most unfavourable effect, both on those who believe the gospel, and those who do not. Among the former, it is calculated very much to destroy your influence, from the appearance of a want of steadiness in your principles; and such a change is apt to prove a stumbling to the latter, from its tendency to make them suppose that the Scriptures do not furnish a perfect rule of conduct to those who embrace them.

Epen. You have really marshalled extremely well, my dear Eugenio, the evils that appear to you likely to accrue from a change of sentiment on the subject of baptism; and, strongly as you have expressed yourself, I can assure you I do not for a moment doubt the sincerity of the good wishes which you and some other friends have expressed for my usefulness. In some of the remarks you have suggested, I am

fully prepared to agree with you. I am perfectly satisfied, that too great stress is apt to be laid upon the particular views we entertain on this subject; and, as you have very fairly acknowledged, the one party appears to me as blameable here as the other. Thus I have known Baptists who seemed almost with reluctance to acknowledge, that there was any thing praise-worthy in the character of those who were of opposite sentiments with regard to baptism from themselves. And what do you think of Pædo-baptists, on the other hand, who could publicly withdraw from all connection with those who saw it their duty to change their sentiments respecting infant baptism, as if all the important principles by which Christians are distinguished, all the powerful ties of union among those who are mutually believers in the Son of God, and all the charities of the Christian character, were concentrated in a particular view of the mode and subjects of this ordinance?

But, after noticing wherein I can cordially agree with what you have stated, you must excuse me, if I say I feel myself constrained to differ most widely respecting the implied, if not the fully expressed, inference from all you have brought forward. It must be this; either that I should not have examined this subject at all; or, that, whatever has been the result of my examination, I should have continued to act as I did. I acknowledge, indeed, there is another alternative; you may wish that the evidence had appeared to me in

a different light. But, considering the light in which it has presented itself to my mind, I am sure you have too just views of the importance of regarding the dictates of conscience, and of the imminent danger of trifling with conviction, to wish any one to act in opposition to what is the result of his mature and deliberate enquiry. Obedience to Jesus Christ, I am confident, not only enters into your definition of a Christian, but forms an essential part of it; and what is implied in this obedience, must, in the case of every individual, be regulated by his conviction, after mature enquiry, of what it is that Jesus commands. All that is often brought forward, then, with regard to the relative importance of this subject, when compared with others, has nothing to do with the way a man ought to act here. The ordinance of baptism, whether viewed as more or less important, all allow ought, at least, to be observed conscientiously. The divine authority ought to be recognised in it; and no man can do this unless he observe the ordinance in that way which it appears to him that authority enjoins.

✓ If any one, then, while he attended to the dictates of his conscience on this subject, were found neglecting what you call the weightier matters of the law, we might justly apply to him the language of Jesus on another occasion, "these things ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone." I am aware there are two opposite extremes into which we are apt to fall. There is certainly such a thing as being tossed

about with every wind of doctrine, on the one hand; but, I think you will allow it is also possible, on the other, under the guise of steadfastness, to neglect that evidence which, if fairly examined, would shew us where we may have erred, or to resist the conclusions to which this evidence would lead. To speak of fickleness, or a disposition to change, is here begging the question. All admit, that if a man be wrong, it is an indication not of his fickleness, but of his attending to the will of God, if he change from error to truth. If a Socinian were to adopt just views of the gospel, you would not say it indicated fickleness, but every Christian would rejoice in such a revolution in his sentiments. You will not suppose, by this illustration, I mean to compare in point of importance, the different views which Christians entertain on the subject of baptism, with those fundamental truths of Christianity, which the Socinian controversy involves. But what I contend for is, that, as there must be a right and a wrong here as well as every where else, I am not only bound to endeavour to ascertain what is the truth, but as soon as I see the system I formerly adopted is not supported by Scripture, I am bound to relinquish it.

Besides, to apply the charge of fickleness to a change of sentiment on such a subject as this, appears quite incorrect. This is, in propriety of speech, only applicable to a changeable disposition, discovered in reference to a subject of confessedly little or no importance. But this

cannot be said of any question regarding a part of the will of Jesus Christ. If it was designed by the great head of the church, that infants should be baptised, it is a deviation from his will; it is an error to deprive them of it. If, on the other hand, it was his will that only those capable of believing should receive this ordinance, it is equally an error to apply it to infants. To those who feel a sacred respect for the authority of the Lord Jesus, it cannot be a matter of indifference whether they understand his will or not. If, then, a man relinquishes the practice of infant baptism, it is absurd to talk of fickleness. If he is wrong, it is too feeble a word, and quite improperly applied. He is in this case in an error, and that error ought to be pointed out, and every effort used to reclaim him from it. If, in such a case, he is not departing from truth to error, or merely exchanging one error for another, he is departing from error to truth, and he is not only free from blame altogether, but sets an example which others are bound to imitate. The charge, then, of fickleness, can only be applied on the supposition, that it is in a great measure a matter of indifference whether, on this point, we hold error or truth.

I would be far from suspecting you, my dear friend, of such a sentiment; but I have heard some good men speak as if they thought a change almost the greatest possible evil, and as if it were even preferable to continue the practice of error to a certain extent, rather than incur the

charge of versatility, and, as they say, lose their influence, by forsaking a practice they formerly observed. Now, I really have no conception of a Christian acting on this principle. Had our forefathers done so, what would have become of the Reformation? and I may add, if this principle were adopted, what would become of all those improvements in the various departments of human knowledge, which are progressively breaking upon the world, and adding to the general stock of our information? Let it not be said, that these changes tend to reflect on the excellence and perfection of Scripture. No, they only reflect on our former interpretation of it. It is no disparagement to the volume of nature, when one who is employed in studying it, alters his sentiments respecting a particular department of its laws, from perceiving that his former interpretation of them was wrong; and it as little reflects on the volume of revelation, if a more minute examination of the doctrine which a particular department of it contains, should lead to a similar change.

I readily allow, wherever there is a change, it indicates an evil somewhere; but it may be an evil that is removed by the change, as well as one introduced by it; it may be error relinquished, as well as error embraced. A mere change, then, abstractly considered, can neither be viewed as a good nor an evil; whether it is the one or the other, must be determined by the circumstances of each individual case. A change from error to

truth is unquestionably a good ; and I do not hesitate to say, a bounden duty with every Christian, as soon as error is detected. A change, on the other hand, from truth to error, is certainly an evil, and as such will be carefully guarded against by all who wish to know and do the will of God.

I am not blind, then, I trust, to the importance of what you have so justly stated as the attribute of a well-regulated mind. I am convinced that nothing is of greater moment than to give every part of divine truth its proportionate measure of attention and regard. To lay inordinate stress on one part, to the neglect of others, equally, perhaps, if not more important, would appear to me very inconsistent with enlarged views of the revealed will of God. I am aware, too, that such is human nature, that there is a powerful tendency in persons of all denominations, to attach a disproportionate importance to those individual points in which they differ from others. If any man, however, appeared more solicitous to make men Baptists, than to make them Christians, he is not the character I should for a moment be disposed to defend. But the admission of all this will not imply that it is a matter of indifference whether men understand the will of Christ on the subject of baptism or not. It never can be argued, that it is inconsistent with a well-regulated mind, to give every part of divine truth a share of our serious attention ; and, in a case where all are called to act, and where there

is a right and a wrong, perseveringly to enquire what is the line of conduct that the revelation which God hath given us, points out. It ought, then, to be distinctly noted, that there are two questions here. The one is, whether infant or adult baptism is to be observed? To this question the answers will be different according to the different opinions men form of the evidence on which it is to be decided. The other is; how far is it of importance in religion, that a man act from conviction? On this point there can be but one opinion. Acting from conviction is not only of importance, but essentially necessary to Christian obedience. While I should never think of leading any man to rely on his own obedience as the ground of his comfort or hope before God, I would as carefully guard against making any one suppose he could enjoy well-grounded comfort, without a conscientious regard to what appeared to him the revealed will of our heavenly father. I am sure you will agree with me, that nothing can be more hostile to a man's own peace; nothing can be more inconsistent with that simplicity and Godly sincerity, which is a first principle in Christianity; nothing is more detestable in character, or calculated more extensively to produce effects the most pernicious, than for one in a public office in the church of Christ, to practise or recommend that, in regard to which he cannot lay his hand on his heart, and say, he believes it to be agreeable to the will of God.

Every one, then, who believes that most ex-

plicit and unambiguous declaration, that "whatever is not of faith is sin," ought most conscientiously to guard against giving any countenance to the maxim that it indicates an unhappy fickleness, a certain squeamishness of conscience, or the want of that steadiness which ought to distinguish a well-regulated mind, if a man sees reason to question a principle he formerly held, and is disposed, in the spirit of fair and cautious enquiry, to try it afresh by the Scriptures, that test to which all Protestants agree every principle they hold ought to be subjected.

I am happy you have mentioned the light in which a change of sentiment on this subject is apt to be viewed, as it affords me an opportunity of suggesting some general principles on which I have seen it my duty to act; and I shall, in this way, have the advantage of knowing if you perceive any thing in them not perfectly tenable. I do not see, then, how a Christian can have the testimony of a good conscience, if he is not prepared to try every principle he holds, and every practice he observes, by the word of God. He can only survey with well-grounded complacency, the whole range of his system, when he feels himself prepared to discard any part which he fairly discovers to be false, and in that point to substitute in its room what, upon more mature enquiry and more enlarged knowledge, he perceives to be agreeable to the will of God. I do not know how others do in reference to this subject, but I should feel it quite inconsistent with

internal peace, were I either to refuse to examine evidence in a point where so many Christians differ, and where there is, from the influence of education and other causes, some risk at least of being wrong; or were I to refuse to follow that line of conduct in favour of which, after mature enquiry, I found the evidence fairly preponderate. There is, I believe, one way of keeping the mind tolerably easy amidst doubts and difficulties, viz. by banishing the subjects to which they relate as effectually as possible from one's thoughts. Such as possess this kind of peace, however, I do not envy. Wherever any man, after fairly examining the subject in question, can lay his hand on his heart and say, that every thing considered, the evidence in his mind clearly leans to the side of infant baptism, that man acts conscientiously in practising it. But if a man either will not attend to the evidence presented to him, which, if he would impartially examine it, might lead him to conclude he was wrong; or if, after examination, he cannot say that the evidence appears decidedly in favour of the system he espouses, he is not, as I conceive, acting in a conscientious manner. These are principles which, I think, cannot be disputed. For my own part, as long as I could perceive no flaw in the argument by which the propriety of infant baptism was inferred from the rite of circumcision, and while I viewed the other passages usually quoted in favour of this practice, in the light I did formerly, the evidence in support of it appeared to pre-

ponderate. Now that this argument appears to me defective, and since I have seen reason to change my views of the other auxiliary passages just referred to, the evidence, in my apprehension, clearly leans to the other side; and till I can be convinced that the alleged defect in the argument is not a real one, I have no hesitation in concluding, that the practice of infant baptism is what I, at least, am called to relinquish.

In taking such a step, I am not ignorant of the prejudice against me I am likely to excite in the minds of some even of my Christian brethren. But I am fully confident, that no mode of procedure that may be adopted by others, ought to produce the smallest hesitation respecting the line of conduct I ought to pursue. At different periods of the church, there are different kinds of tests to which Christians have been exposed. In the early ages they were called to prove their attachment to their Master, by obeying his commandments, at the risk of bonds, of imprisonments, and death. But the severity of this trial was greatly mitigated by the cordial union that subsisted among the disciples themselves; by the strength of that mutual confidence, and the ardour of that mutual affection, which so often excited the astonishment and admiration of the heathen around them. Now, however, the test is changed. In this country, at least, Christians are not exposed to open persecution; but they have to encounter, not merely the ridicule and reproach of the world, but, what

is often a much severer trial, either the more secret jealousy or more open opposition of many whom they are still called to view as disciples of Jesus Christ. It is an unquestionable fact, that, on many occasions, it is impossible for one who simply wishes to know and do the will of God, to follow the dictates of conscience, though he act in the most temperate manner, without incurring the loss of the confidence, and the manifest alienation of the affections, of some of his Christian brethren from whom he feels himself constrained to differ. But from such a trial, however painful, he must not shrink. If the friends of Jesus wish him to neglect that which he believes to be the will of his Master, he must as really act in opposition to their wishes, as in opposition to those who are the enemies of the cross of Christ. It would be a melancholy proof of failure in the day of trial, of such a failure as I should conceive would be enough to ruin a man's peace, if the one kind of opposition, any more than the other, were capable of preventing him from faithfully acting according to his views of the revealed will of God.

From your observation of the world, I dare say you have often remarked, how common and how easy it is to excite popular prejudice against those who leave the beaten road of sentiment or practice they were formerly accustomed to tread, by trumpeting up the charge of a disposition to change. This is a very convenient accusation, as all can unite in disseminating it, without ta-

king the trouble of enquiring on what evidence it is founded. But did it never appear to you very inconsistent for men to be so willing as all are to confess their fallibility in general, and yet, whenever you come to particulars, they speak as if no such fallibility existed,—as if there were not a subject, even among those which have perplexed the minds of the most sincere enquirers into the will of God, in which they can have any toleration for those who differ from them, or in which they conceive there is any room for change? I have no ambition, however, to possess the praise of that kind of steadiness of principle, and uniformity of conduct, which I could not maintain without either shutting my eyes against evidence that, on any particular subject, presents itself; or acting in opposition to that evidence, after I see its force. I trust, in the present case, you will allow, I have acted in a manner that is effectually proof against the charge of precipitancy. I have most maturely weighed the argument, endeavouring if possible to detect any fallacy it might contain. You know well, that, so far as regards my temporal interests, I had every inducement to act in the way I did formerly, if, without violating the dictates of conscience, I could have done so. I have, besides, omitted no method I could think of, to obtain a solution of my difficulties; I have consulted those of my friends on whose discernment I could place the fullest confidence, and whose acquaintance with the subject and habits of enquiry, most effectually quali-

fied them for discovering any error that might have crept into those reasonings by which I was constrained to relinquish my former system. Now, though I have to thank them for their friendship, and their readiness to suggest what occurred to them, I confess I have not succeeded in discovering any fallacy in the arguments by which I have been influenced.

In such circumstances, then, what, my good friend, could you have wished me to do? You surely could not suppose, that any consideration of usefulness ought to have induced me to continue the observance of infant baptism, while I saw the evidence decidedly preponderating against it; and yet this was my only other alternative, had I not adopted the line of conduct I have pursued.

All, I suppose, will readily allow, that the mere circumstance of a man being educated as a Baptist or Pedit-baptist, ought not to be considered as any evidence that the truth lies on the one side instead of the other. In this case, then, as in every other, it is to the law and to the testimony we must appeal. I am aware, however, of the extreme difficulty of disentangling those parts of our principles which stand on distinct and satisfactory evidence, from those which are chiefly indebted for the hold they have of our minds to the influence of prejudice, of education, of early associations, or of the external circumstances in which we are placed. It is, I conceive, no impeachment of any man's sincerity in

his enquiries after truth, to say, that he is apt to be much, though to himself imperceptibly, influenced by each of these. Nay, it would indicate either great ignorance of human nature, or great vanity in conceiving himself superior to the common weakness of his species, if a man were to suppose himself incapable of being biassed by such influence. It is only by means of the imperceptible operation produced by such causes, that we can account for the evidence, on many points, striking the minds of men of equal discernment so differently. Now, I know no way of getting quit of any false principle we may have imbibed from education, or from any other source, so effectual as by our being willing to bring every sentiment we hold to the test of Scripture. We may not, after all, completely succeed; some remaining prejudice may still imperceptibly exert its influence; but this appeal to the Scriptures, associated with prayer to the Father of lights, is the only method I know of endeavouring to get our minds purified from error. If I felt a secret reluctance to bring any sentiment to the test of the word of God, I should have reason to suspect I was afraid to discover the truth from the consequences to which the discovery might lead me.

I had almost forgotten to notice the pernicious effects you suppose a change of sentiment regarding infant baptism may produce, from the tendency it may have to throw a stumbling block before both Christians and the world. These evils are, I conceive, a good deal imaginary.

Christians have at least no real ground of offence, if, in the spirit of the gospel, we endeavour to shew them, that, in a particular point, they may have mistaken the will of their Master. There must be something very defective in their knowledge, if they cannot distinguish between those fundamental points in which all Christians are agreed, and those, I have no hesitation in saying, of comparatively inferior moment, in which they differ. I have no conception, then, that temperately stating to Christians the evidence from Scripture, even against a principle or practice to which they have formerly adhered, can be productive of any bad effect on their minds. It will rather tend to quicken enquiry; to confirm them more if they are previously right; and, if they have hitherto been in an error, it cannot be corrected too soon. Taking, then, either side of the question, I do not see how a change of sentiment on the point in question, can lead to the pernicious consequences you seem so much to dread. Thus, admitting, for the sake of argument, that infant baptism is right, the cause of truth must be promoted, not injured, by temperate enquiry. The objections which have occurred to me may occur to others; and a satisfactory refutation of them will more effectually confirm those who maintain this doctrine that they hold the truth of God. If, on the other hand, there be reason to suspect the evidence in support of it is fallacious, it is surely not too soon to discover error, and to correct it; you never can

suppose that this can prove a ground of offence to any disciple of Jesus.

You imagine, farther, that a person changing his sentiments on such a subject, is apt to throw a stumbling block in the way of unbelievers. But how is it calculated to do so? If this be a stumbling block, it is thrown in their way already, and it cannot be increased by any change in either you or me, or a hundred more. The offence here, so far as there is one, consists in the fact which is undeniable, that on this point many professing Christians certainly do differ. It does not depend on a few individuals taking either the one side or the other of this question. To a reflecting mind, however, I should conceive a change of sentiment on such a subject as the one in question, instead of proving an offence, should really be productive of the opposite effect. It shews an enquirer that our religion is not merely the result of education. It is a pledge that, as a whole, it is founded upon evidence while we are willing to relinquish our former opinion on a subordinate point, when the evidence by which, in other cases, we are influenced, is found to fail.

But farther, if an offence is presented to the world by the differences that subsist among Christians, it naturally occurs as a question of considerable importance, How is it most likely to be done away? To this, I think, we may fairly reply: By temperate and patient enquiry, which of all things, is in the issue most likely to pro-

duce a greater unity of sentiment among Christians than is at present to be found. If I were farther asked, What is to be done till this unity be obtained? Is there no way of mitigating the evil of the diversity in opinion which at present prevails, and of preventing it from proving such an offence to the world as it frequently does? I should feel equally ready to reply: Yes, it may be materially mitigated by Christians differing from one another, when constrained to do so, with a spirit becoming the gospel of Christ. It has been common for those who contend for uniformity of sentiment, or, in other words, for all men adopting their peculiar opinions, to expatiate on the pernicious effects produced on the world by the want of such uniformity. The truth, however, is, that the narrow and bigotted spirit with which this uniformity is often contended for, and the tone of crimination which is used by those who plead for it, against all who differ from them, frequently afford a more powerful handle to infidels against the Christian profession, than all the differences of sentiment put together by which the Christian world has ever been agitated. Let Christians learn to treat one another as brethren, though in some points, from remaining ignorance in this world of imperfection, they differ; let them shew a readiness to unite, in points in which they conscientiously can do so; let them shew that they love and esteem the image of their common Lord wherever they behold it: and the objections of infidelity, from any remaining

inferior differences, will be in a great measure silenced ; while the natural effect of such a spirit will be, to diminish and gradually to annihilate those very differences on which such objections are founded.

My answer, then, to all your formidable arguments against a change in my sentiments, may be shortly stated thus :—It is a principle clearly laid down in Scripture, and of universal application in Christian practice, that “ whatever is not of faith is sin.” It is as clearly revealed, that “ we are not to do evil that good may come.” From the reasons I have stated, I cannot see infant baptism to be agreeable to the word of God ; as I cannot, therefore, practise it in faith, it is manifest I ought not to practise it at all. If either Christians, or the world, are offended at my extending my enquiries into the meaning of Scripture, and correcting what I found to be erroneous in my former principles, the blame lies not with me, but with them. It is my concern that I give no real ground of offence, by any thing improper in the spirit with which I differ from my brethren. But while this is unquestionably my duty on the one hand, I am no less clearly called, on the other, to regulate my conduct by those views of the divine will, which ultimately result from an impartial and deliberate examination of that unerring rule which God hath given us. With regard to my usefulness, I conceive myself a very imperfect judge of it. Though apparently abridged, if it be for truth I am con-

tending, my usefulness may be ultimately much more extensive, than though the apparent sphere of it were greater, if I could not occupy that sphere without its being necessarily connected with the maintenance of what appears to me a certain portion of error. At all events, the probability of usefulness can never be a plea for violating the dictates of one's own mind, and thus directly opposing the revealed will of God. Duty is mine. The measure of my usefulness depends on him who reigns on high. It is only when conscious I am in the path of duty, I can with confidence leave the issue to him who judgeth righteously.

You must really excuse the appearance of egotism into which, in mentioning these things, I am unavoidably betrayed. I am not condemning others who differ from me; I am merely stating the reasons of my own conduct; and, though you do differ from me, I think you will have candour enough to admit their force.

Eug. I am aware, indeed, of one circumstance which must have made your situation a trying one; and that is, that, from your public station, you were so frequently called to dispense the ordinance of infant baptism. I can easily conceive a private member of a church having scruples on this subject, while he could keep these scruples to himself long enough, if he was not immediately called to observe the institution. But the case of a pastor is quite different; he must act, and it must be confessed, nothing is more painful than being called to practise, or recommend to others,

that, of the propriety or lawfulness of which one is not fully satisfied in his own mind.

Epen. I used to think as you do, not only that the situation of a pastor was a peculiarly trying one, when called to do what he was not perfectly satisfied was right; but also, that one might easily continue a private member of a church though he had scruples on this subject. I am not, however, satisfied that I was right in thinking so. If a person has such scruples, he should endeavour to have them removed, and this cannot well be done, without their being known. Besides, I conceive it is a most unfavourable state of things, if a person dare not hint his difficulties, lest he should be suspected. I have no objections to forbearance, where Christians differ on this subject: but there is no forbearance where a man dare not avow his difficulties, and that peace which is purchased by the concealment of them, is certainly purchased at by far too high a price. Suppose, in a church where such a system of concealment is necessary, one happens to become the subject of discipline, by fairly avowing his objections to infant baptism; surely those of the members who feel similar objections, but conceal them, can have but little peace, when they apparently join with the general body, in condemning those by whom such objections are avowed, while they reflect, that, if all were known, they themselves would be in the same condemnation. No; these are not times for any such disguise. If a man have scruples on this subject, he ought not to be ashamed

to avow them, whether he is in a private or a public station. If he thinks a diversity of sentiment on this point should be a matter of forbearance, he should not, by his silence, tacitly acquiesce with those who do not. Our influence as individuals may not be great; but such as it is, we are answerable for the use we make of it; and it is only by steadily employing it, without shrinking from difficulties, in what we conceive to be the cause of truth, that we can have the answer of a good conscience towards God, and solid and permanent satisfaction in the day of trial.

Eug. With regard to the general principles you have stated, I must confess I do not see how they can be disputed. I am aware that, whether the subject of dispute be considered as more or less important, it is essential to Christian conduct, that every one be persuaded in his own mind. But, while you seem all alive to the danger of being misled by education or early associations, I think you have omitted another source of error, into which, from the extreme deceitfulness of the human heart, we are equally liable to be betrayed.

Epen. What is this?

Eug. The prejudices of education are, no doubt, one source of error; but, is not too great a love of novelty another? In rejecting what we have received from education, is there not a danger of throwing away some of the wheat along with the chaff? Perhaps, the one of these has, in late years, been as fruitful a source of error as the other.

Suppose, for example, one in the course of his enquiries has discovered, or thinks he has discovered, something new on a subject which has been long and amply discussed, is he not likely to feel such a prepossession in favour of that particular view that has presented itself to his mind—to feel such a sort of parental attachment to it, as is apt (like what occurs in other attachments of a similar nature) to blind him to its defects. I should think, from the knowledge you have already expressed of human nature, you can hardly fail to see that this is a source of error, as real and as dangerous as those you have mentioned.

Epen. I see the drift of your remark, my good friend, and most fully acknowledge the justice of it. Though I may have pursued the objections to the argument for infant baptism, which is derived from the Abrahamic covenant, a little farther than I have at least seen done by others, you quite mistake me, if you suppose I claim the credit of originality in these objections. But if you think I am apt to feel a partiality for this child of my own, as you are disposed to insinuate, I bring the bantling to you to point out its defects. I can assure you I am desirous of discovering them. You have no such paternal fondness, and will be able, on this account, more easily to detect them. I have been aware, I hope, of the necessity of guarding against the very evil you allude to. After all, what can we in such a case do, but, carefully watching against eve-

ry source of error, bring the subject to which our enquiries relate, to the standard of the word of God. You have used a very apposite figure; there is a danger of throwing away the wheat with the chaff. It reminds me of the language of John the Baptist, who says, when speaking of the Lord Jesus, "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor." It is surely by the word we are to discover the difference between the chaff and the wheat, in sentiment, as well as in character. After, however, making every abatement for any partiality I might be supposed to feel for the particular view of this subject that has occurred to me, I cannot see the force of the argument at all relaxed, by which I infer the inconclusiveness of the common reasoning from circumcision in support of infant baptism; nor can I see the other passages adduced in support of this practice, in the same light I did formerly.

Eug. I was happy to hear you express so much of a spirit of forbearance, to those who differ from you in regard to baptism. I hope you will ever cultivate such a spirit; and if you do, I should have less objection to your judging for yourself on that subject. You must be very sensible, that such a spirit of forbearance is rarely to be found among those who adopt Baptist sentiments. I should like to know, merely for my own information, how far you think this forbearance ought to be carried, and on what principles you maintain it.

Epen. I think I can put into your hands a letter which I have in my possession, on this subject, which expresses my sentiments so fully, that I cannot give you a better account of them. The conduct of Christians towards those who differ from them, is a subject well deserving our most serious attention. Many good men, acting I believe most conscientiously, have, in my view at least, mistaken the line of conduct here, which the spirit of the gospel seems to require. Here is the letter I refer to. You can read it at your leisure; and I should be happy to be favoured with your remarks upon it. By the way, a thought occurred to me the other day, I do not know how you will relish it. I have been much indebted to you, for the patient hearing you have given me, in mentioning my objections to the evidence in support of infant baptism; and for the candid statement of any thing that occurred to you at the moment, in refutation of my reasoning. What would you think of putting the substance of these conversations in writing, and, through the medium of the press, submitting them to the consideration of those who have studied the subject. As I have no doubt it is both your desire and mine to bring the truth on this subject to light as far as possible, we may in this way, perhaps, get some valuable hints from some of our friends, pointing out the fallacy of the argument, either on the one side or the other, where it may have escaped us both; or furnishing us with some additional confirmation of

some of the observations that have been suggested. In this way, I am sure, the cause of truth cannot be injured; nay, it may be essentially promoted, if we can attract the attention of men of enquiry to the subject of our discussion, and afford them an opportunity of throwing out hints, without the trouble of arranging and preparing them for the public, or the risk of their names appearing, if they are disposed to conceal them. The greater concentration that can be obtained of talent and information, on a subject which has so long divided Christians, and still divides them, so much the better. Surely, the truth upon this subject will be so clearly ascertained at some future period, as to put an end to that diversity of sentiment in regard to it, which we well know at present so much prevails; and though we should not be so happy as to reach this most desirable point, if we can contribute, by exciting or keeping alive enquiry, to produce a single movement nearer to the attainment of it, our exertions will not be in vain.

Eng. I certainly can have no objections to freedom of enquiry, on this subject as well as every other, and should be happy to see Christians more at one regarding it. But it has so long been a subject of controversy, and the evidence turns on such nice points, in various parts of it, that, while I am fully satisfied a difference of sentiment respecting baptism ought, as much as possible, to be a matter of the most unlimited forbearance among Christians, I must say, I am

not very sanguine in my expectations of finding any thing brought forward, so perfectly conclusive on either side of the question, as to lay the controversy entirely asleep.

Epen. I am not certain that you are correct in indulging such a spirit of despondency. It is surely unfavourable, at least, to the successful investigation of the point in question, as the want of the hope of ultimate success, of all things, tends most effectually to cramp exertion, and repress enquiry. We certainly, however, look forward to a period when Christians will be more united in sentiment than they are at present. We have seen that though error on other subjects long prevailed, yet, by persevering enquiry, men have been gradually emancipated from its influence. It was in this gradual manner, for example, the doctrine of the rights of conscience was introduced. At first, many things which at the time might appear plausible, owing to the prejudices arising from the education that then prevailed, were brought against it. The enlightened spirit of Locke, in contending for this important principle, had to combat the doctrine of "Moderate and convenient penalties," which those who trembled at the complete freedom of the conscience from human authority, were in his day so eagerly disposed to maintain. But, by continued discussion and enquiry, the truth at length burst forth with such refulgent lustre, as to silence all opposition; so that, (to use the words of an eloquent writer,) "now, thanks to the efforts of

Locke, and the freedom of subsequent discussion, the word *penalty*, as applied to religion, is a word, the articulation of which is more than could be endured." Were any man now to attempt to question this doctrine, he would find that he had forgotten in what age he lived, and that public opinion had got so far before him, that he could not obtain a patient hearing.

Let me quote another example, which strikingly illustrates the rapid progress of the human mind, when its enquiries are directed into the right channel, in clearly discovering truths and duties that had long been overlooked. Till within these few years, the heathen world had been allowed to remain in the same deplorable state of ignorance and wretchedness, (if we except the labours of the Moravians,) in which it had existed for ages, without almost any attempt to pour on its extensive regions of moral darkness the light of life. But, when the criminal negligence of Christians in this respect was pointed out, they seemed like men suddenly roused from a profound sleep. The importance of the long neglected duty burst on their minds with irresistible force, and none who felt the value of salvation to themselves, could remain indifferent about the diffusion of the knowledge of it among those who were living in ignorance of God, and of that revelation of divine mercy he hath been pleased to communicate.

Besides, as one truth often hangs upon another, so there is often a similar connection among

the various branches of error. The introduction of error is like the bursting of a shell. It is impossible to say where it may strike. It often diffuses its pernicious influence, and does material injury, at a great distance from the point whence the mischief issues. In like manner, the discovery of truth on one subject, may often be found to lead to the discovery of it on another, even where the connection between the two subjects seemed at first a very latent one, and only became apparent by the light that was poured on the one being manifestly, though unexpectedly, reflected on the other.

My encouragement to persevering inquiry upon the point on which we have been conversing, is this:—If infant baptism be a portion of Antichristian error, which has been introduced into the church of God, its character, sooner or later, will be clearly detected; and what so likely to lead to such a detection as a dispassionate examination of the Scriptures, with a readiness impartially to weigh the difficulties on each side of the question. If, on the other hand, it be really a portion of divine truth, its title to this character will, in this way, more decidedly appear. Where enquiry of this kind is pursued, it is only error, wherever existing, that has occasion to dread the consequences. Truth, I am confident, will have reason to rejoice in them, as they must ever be favourable to her reign.

In every other department of human knowledge, we find the spirit of assiduous enquiry cor-

rects errors, and accumulates information; and why should we despair of some similar effects being produced by our persevering investigation of the Scriptures? You will not suspect, while I say so, that I mean to insinuate that our detection of error in divine things, and our progress in knowledge, depends on ourselves. No; but we are entitled to view them as closely connected with diligently searching the word of God; the means which he himself has appointed, by which our knowledge of divine truth is to be promoted. But you are forgetting my question. Have you any objections to what I proposed, viz. putting the substance of our conversations on types, (I shall willingly run the risk of the publication myself,) that we may thus enjoy the benefit of such observations as any of our friends may be disposed to communicate?

Eug. I hope, you do not propose to give our names. I told you at first, that I should state what occurred to me, with the frankness and confidence of friendship, for your consideration. I certainly never supposed I was committing myself to the public in what I said, or that you were going to make me an author.

Epen. You do not suspect, I hope, my dear friend, that I would make any improper use of your friendship and confidence. No, you need not be afraid that any thing shall be done but what meets your approbation. I had no thought, however, of introducing names. Some, who know my situation, will probably suspect the

part I have had in these conversations.* But there shall not be the smallest allusion that can refer to you; though, without flattery, I must say, that I think you have no reason to be ashamed of your share in them. The common argument on this subject, you have stated, I think, very fairly; and I could hardly name one plausible objection that I ever heard made to my reasoning, which you have not, in one shape or another, brought forward. The less reference, however, to names, so much the better. It is strength of argument that alone ought to be considered in controversy—controversy—I am not fond of this word; I would rather say, in our investigation of those points in which Christians differ. I am sure this expression is at least more applicable to our discussions. This, by the bye, suggests another reason why I should wish your permission to give a sketch of these conversations. I hope, without being too much chargeable with

* To prevent all misconceptions, it may be proper here to remark, that though my confidence in infant baptism was completely shaken, I at first proposed to delay observing adult baptism, till I should see how far the objections stated in these conversations to the former practice might be removed. Recollecting, however, the improbability of this, after all that I had heard and read on this subject---that the time is short---that, after mature enquiry, every man is called to act according to his view of divine truth; and that it is as possible to err on the side of procrastination, as on that of precipitancy; I considered it my duty to be baptised. I shall not, however, I trust, on this account, be less willing to examine whatever may tend to throw light on this or any other part of the will of God.

Epen.

a spirit of self-gratulation, we may consider the temper with which our discussions have been conducted, not altogether unworthy the imitation of those who are engaged (if we must have the expression) in religious controversy. I shall gladly join with you in expressing our mutual obligations to any one who shall detect and correct the errors into which any of us have fallen, or give fresh strength to any of our arguments. If error be detected and truth discovered, what matters it by whom? I should be extremely happy if we could be the means of exciting some farther enquiry on this subject.

Eug. If you really think the publishing of these conversations may lead others to the temperate investigation of the subject of them, I cheerfully acquiesce in your proposal. But recollect, in the first place, no names; secondly, I should like to see the statement you propose to give of them, after you write it out, and before you submit it to the public eye.

Epen. Most certainly; and, if you please, I shall draw up a short Letter, addressed to all who are accustomed to examine the word of God, and who may be disposed to favour us with any additional remarks, calculated to throw other light on the subject in question.

Eug. Well, you can shew me this Letter when you have drawn up the proposed sketch.

Epen. I will.

The above statement of the Conversations between Eugenio and Epenetus having been submitted to the former, and received his approbation in point of correctness, is now presented to Christians of every denomination; and the courteous reader is particularly requested to attend to the following Letter.

Christian Brethren,

Having lately had occasion to discuss pretty fully, in different conversations, the argument respecting infant baptism, we take the opportunity of laying these conversations before you, with a view to promote farther enquiry into this subject. It must be admitted by all, that on whichever side the truth lies on this long-disputed point, it is very desirable that it should be as clearly brought to light as possible; and nothing, we are persuaded, is more fitted than temperate enquiry to do so. The parties in these conversations will feel themselves indebted to Christians of any denomination, who shall detect any thing fallacious here brought forward in the argument, either on the one side or the other. They would be happy if those who may detect such a fallacy, or who may perceive what would add material strength to any of the positions here advanced, would either, in the spirit of candid investigation, lay their remarks before the public themselves, or transmit them to the undersigned, through the medium of the publishers of these pages. If any shall have the goodness to com-

municate any such hints, they may rest assured they shall be carefully attended to, and tried by what appears to be their intrinsic weight, from whatever quarter they may come, and to whichever side of the question they relate. Any observations of this nature which may seem deserving of public notice, as contributing to throw additional light on a subject which has so long divided Christians, the undersigned will be happy to embrace some opportunity of laying before the public, without any allusion to the quarter (if they should know it) from which they may come. In this way, they trust they may contribute to promote an object in which they are convinced many are disposed to join with them, viz. the discovery and the confirmation of truth, as well as the detection and the exposure of error, wherever either the one or the other is to be found. With best wishes, we are,

Christian Brethren,

Yours, &c.

EUGENIO.
EPENETUS.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Extracts from Dansius, and other references respecting Proselyte Baptism.

I SHALL here quote the original passages referred to in Conversation III. p. 119., from the work of Dansius, as edited by Meuschen.

“ Id vero nullum prorsus meretur assensum, quod filium Pharaonis ad rivum descendente lotum, Rabbi Johannes statuatur, eo ipso baptizatam fuisse ad proselytismum.” p. 264.

“ Si certum foret, Jacobum Patriarcham captas a filiis Mulieres Sichemitidas secum retinuisse, in familiam suam ac religionem co-optatas: non careret probabilitate, ab eo derivare hunc, quem describimus baptismum.” p. 265.

“ Communis inter Judæos Antiquos circumfertur sententia, baptismum ceu medium initiandi a patriarchis ad proselytos derivatum, inde a temporibus promulgandæ legis in gente sua obtinuisse, ab ipso Deo institutum.” p. 276.

“ Baptismus siquidem hic fœderalis una creditur abstergere sordes antiquas. Hinc eadem aqua eidem adjudicatur quæ, aliis detergendis pollutionibus. Ubi quo puriores sunt aquæ, magisque pellucidæ eo ad lavacrum existunt aptiores. Aliunde autem haustæ licet fontanæ sint, vel infra legitimam mensuram 40. Satorum collectæ et haustis ad tres logos auctæ, aut jam coinquinatæ, ad hunc finem prorsus existimantur ineptæ.” p. 283.

“ Baptizandi modus ita peragitur, ut baptizandus modeste ac sensim, exutis vestibus, in aquam demissus, edita denuo

confessione sua, simul ac semel totum immergeret corpus: membris omnibus ita dispositis, ut singulas ipsorum partes, ne pilis quidem exceptis, aut rugis contractoribus, undiquaque aqua diffunderet." p. 283.

" Baptismus proselytorum Judaicus, e Baptismo Israelitarum Origenariorum V. T. derivandus est, ut rivulus e suo fonte." p. 287.

" Non est mei instituti, sollicitius hic inquirere in primi hujus baptismi circumstantias; quæ paræ admodum a Talmudistis recensentur, in Scriptura omittuntur penitus." p. 269.

To these quotations from this author, introduced in the above mentioned Conversation, some others of a similar description may be added. Thus, p. 294, after speaking of his conviction that the Israelites were baptised at Mount Sinai, he proceeds: " Occurrunt equidem hinc inde alia quædam baptismi initiationis inter eos ante captivitatem existentis vestigia; sed subobscura sunt, multisque onerata difficultatibus. Gentilium, tempore Davidis et Salomonis conversorum baptismus, sola nititur recentiorum auctoritate: quæ sæpe fallit." Again, p. 305. " Baptismus Christianus in singulis Ecclesiæ membris requiritur adhibendus: nec ordinarie sufficit, natiū esse a parentibus baptismo ad Christianismum initiatis. Sed baptismus Judaicus creditur parentes sub alas divinæ Majestatis introducere, una cum omnibus a se descendentibus posteris: quorum nemo per baptismum in fœdus recipitur, sed per solam, si mas fuerit, circumcisionem." i. e. There indeed occur certain vestiges of the baptism of initiation existing among them (the Jews) before the captivity; but these are very obscure, and loaded with many difficulties. The baptism of the converted Gentiles in the times of Solomon and David, is supported by the sole authority of more recent writers, which often deceives us. Christian baptism is required to be administered to the individual members of the church; nor is it generally sufficient that a person be born of parents initiated into Christianity by baptism. But Jewish baptism is believed to introduce parents under the wings of the divine Majesty, along with all their descendants, of whom no one is received into the covenant by baptism, but if he be a male, by circumcision alone.

I should not have thought of being so minute in these quotations, had not the work from which they are taken been particularly mentioned, and its authority a good deal rested upon, by a writer of such distinguished literature and acuteness, as certainly entitles his statements to the most serious investigation. I have so much respect also for the sincerity of the author referred to, that I conceive it is very possible he may have discovered some testimonies in favour of proselyte baptism in this volume, which have escaped my notice. I assuredly have found none which can give me any confirmation of the existence of this practice.

A friend, to whom I had mentioned that I was engaged in searching for authorities in support of proselyte baptism, and that I was surprised to find such men as Dr Owen, Dr Lardner, and Dr Jennings, all questioning the existence of such a practice, some time afterwards sent me a note, from which I give the following extract. -It will be found to contain a reference to other testimonies of great weight on this point; which I give entirely upon the authority of the writer, as I have not the books by me to which he refers. The accuracy, however, of these references I have no reason to doubt.

“To the names of Owen, Lardner, and Jennings, all Pædobaptists, all men of the first erudition and research, and equally distinguished by candour and talents, you may add the following; in whose works I have lately searched, to learn their sentiments. It is needless to say, that the continental writers employ much greater industry on such subjects than either English or Scotch; nor that the following authors are the first in Germany, to whom an appeal would lie respecting a *matter of theological fact*, viz. whether the Jewish writers of early times do mention that proselytes were initiated by baptism. All of them represent it as a far more modern practice, subsequent to, and derived from, the practice of Christians; and Ernesti in particular, calls Danzius’s ideas *contortissima et oppido ridicula*.

“Gott. Wernsdorff Disput. de baptismo mere divino, 1710.

“J. Fechtius in Coll. Syllog. Controvers. p. 412.

“Deylingius Observat. Miscellan. tom. iii. p. 253, &c. tom. iv. p. 226, 227, &c. Leips. 1736.

“ J. Franc. Buddæus Inst. Theol. dogm. p. 1436.

“ J. Gottl. Carpzov. Antiq. J. Codic et Gent. Hebræor. Annot. lib. i. p. 47. Frankfort, 1748.

“ C. F. Boernerus Dissert. de Joanne *πρωτο βαπτιστη*, Lips. 1729.

“ J. Christ. Doderlein Instit. Theol. Christ. tom. ii. p. 651. Norim. et Altorff. 1783.

“ J. A. Ernesti Opuscula Theolog. p. 231. Lipsiæ, 1792.

“ To these names might be added, I find, many more, all concurring in the same sentiments. May the Lord deliver us from prejudices! and cause the truth to have free course, and be glorified! It may be well said of this argument for baptizing infants, in the words of *Carpzovius*, ‘ Male consultum baptismo infantum si non alio niteretur Achille.’ *Carpz. Antiq. S. C.* &c. p. 47.

No. II.

On the mode of Baptism; and how far those who have already for some time professed Christianity should be baptised.

In the preceding Conversations nothing is stated respecting the *mode* of baptism. This never appeared to me so important a branch of the discussion as that which regards the *subjects* of this ordinance. It may perhaps be owing to my friend viewing it in the same light, that he did not introduce it. As this, however, might be thought an omission, if no notice were taken of this part of the subject, will the reader accept of what at least completely removes any difficulty from my mind upon this point, under the following parable.

A certain nobleman proposed to spend a few years in a distant country. But before his departure, he called together so many of his servants, and gave to each of them a portion of land, which they were to cultivate before his return. Among other injunctions, he desired each of them to occupy part of the ground allotted him in planting a vineyard. Some of them accordingly marked out a portion of ground for this purpose. But as vineyards were not very popular in that part of the

country, and as the neighbouring farmers, who had no connection with this nobleman, were disposed to treat with a sneer the employment of so much ground in this way, some of the servants began to think, that, as there was no specific mention made of the number of vines that must be in a vineyard, nor of the quantity of ground it must occupy, they could sufficiently comply with their lord's command, by getting a few vines huddled into a private corner of their respective farms. This so far succeeded, that they not only escaped the laugh of the neighbouring farmers, but many of these thought it had so good an effect, that they began to imitate their example, though, as they belonged to other masters, it was from no regard to the authority of the nobleman they thought of planting any vines at all. This conduct, however, excited a serious difference among the servants. The one party maintained the other was not complying with their master's command: that it required their avowedly setting apart a certain portion of their land for the purpose specified, and having all upon it that was generally understood as connected with a vineyard. The other party contended, that, as no specific quantity of ground was mentioned in the directions of their master, as no one could say that a precise number of vines was necessary to constitute a vineyard, this name might with as much propriety be given to their little detached border of vines, as to the more extensive vineyards of their fellow-servants. Besides, they were confirmed in this opinion, from the name of vineyard having become quite currently applied to these little borders that were planted with vines by the neighbouring farmers, after their example. Much was said about the etymology of the name; and it was frequently alleged to be equally applicable to a few vines in a detached corner, as to a more regular plantation of them. One evening a very keen dispute took place on this subject between two of these servants; and after they had discussed it for some time, and shewn a good deal of ingenuity on both sides, a third who was present was asked his opinion, and what he thought of doing in regard to this part of their master's injunctions. I perceive, said he in reply, that the only dispute between you is, whether the name of vineyard can be strictly applied to a small number of vines put in a de-

tached corner. A piece of ground fairly and regularly inclosed and planted with vines, you both allow most unquestionably to constitute a vineyard. On this point there is no dispute. Now the truth is, I love my master; I have been deeply indebted to him; and, without meaning to insinuate any thing against any of my fellow-servants, I am very anxious *to be sure* that I comply with his will. If I can discover a line of conduct which *I am certain* constitutes a compliance with his command, it is argument sufficient with me to prefer it to one in regard to which any doubt on this matter can be entertained. If others, then, choose to satisfy themselves with a few vines in a corner, I have nothing to say; I am determined avowedly to enclose such a piece of ground as is usually employed for the purpose he prescribed, and so to plant it and improve it, that, when my lord shall come, there may be no room to doubt how far I have complied with his will, but that, on my farm at least, he shall find what *all parties agree is strictly and literally a vineyard.*

Another question that has been moved on the subject of baptism, of which also no notice has been taken in the preceding Conversations, is, whether it is the duty of a Christian to submit to this ordinance after he has for a considerable time made a profession of Christianity, when he discovers that there is no authority in Scripture for baptising infants? It has been argued, that, as baptism is an initiatory ordinance; as all admit that it ought to be observed when a person first professes Christianity, it is quite out of place at any other period; and if the proper time be omitted, there is no propriety in observing it at all.

There are many questions which may be agitated, where, perhaps, the most satisfactory way of deciding upon them is by a simple appeal to the consciences of those who fear God. This case supposes, that a Christian at the time he first professed Christianity, either did not think of the subject of baptism at all, or conceived that the command of Christ had been observed with regard to him by his parents, but that now he has discovered that infant baptism has no foundation in the word of God. What then follows? He must be convinced, that here is an ordinance of Christ which he has hitherto neglected. I ask, then, whether it appears more agreeable to

the dictates of an enlightened conscience thus to argue:—Because from ignorance of the will of Christ, or inattention to it, at the time I first professed Christianity, I neglected to observe the initiatory rite, I am determined to continue in the neglect of it, as the proper season of attending to it is now gone:—Or to say; while from ignorance of the will of my Divine Master I neglected this ordinance at the time it ought to have been observed, now that I have discovered what his will is, I shall shew my regret for my former ignorance or negligence by now obeying his command.—In the one case, we are avowedly living in the continued neglect of what we believe to be a command of Jesus Christ. In the other, though the proper period of observing that command is past, we do what we can to correct the effects of our former ignorance, by shewing our respect for the authority of the Saviour, as soon as we discover what it is he enjoins. Whatever others may think, to me it does not appear to admit of any doubt, which of these two modes of reasoning, with the practical consequence which each involves, is most calculated to impart satisfaction, in the prospect of appearing before Him who has commanded baptism to be administered to all who believe.

It may appear almost unnecessary to notice the unsuitableness of a question which is often proposed on this subject, were it not that it sometimes comes from those from whom better things might be expected. It has been asked, What good can baptism do to those who have already made a profession of Christianity? While they already have the thing signified, of what avail is it their merely partaking of the external sign? I would answer this question in the same way I would answer another. I have sometimes thought, that if an inhabitant of China were to visit this country, and witness a number of Christians partaking of the Lord's supper, he might naturally enough ask, What good could it do to these people to partake together of a little bread and wine? No Christian, however, would be at a loss for a reply. He would say, it was not only a symbolical action, intended to recal to our recollection a truth in which we were most deeply interested, but that it was the command of the Founder of our religion, and that, as we believed him to be commissioned by God, our obligations to obey

his commands followed as a matter of course. This answer is easily transferred to the case of baptism, and equally applicable. If any one objected to the propriety of our observing the Lord's supper, because we were already interested in that which the sacred symbols represented, we should at once see the impertinence of the objection. Equally futile is that which is brought from the same consideration against the propriety of observing baptism. I attach no charm to immersion in water. When I attend to this ordinance, it is not the result of some enthusiastic feeling, as if some wonderful effect were to be produced by it. I simply act in conformity to the revealed will of Jesus Christ. I in this case do what will bear the test of the most rigid investigation: what the most accurate reasoner must be constrained to admit, flows most logically from my principles. The steps of this reasoning are few and plain. I profess, after having examined the evidences of Christianity, to receive it as a divine revelation. I am, of course, bound to obey the divine Author of it. I find he has commanded those who believe in him to be baptised. This command I have not yet obeyed. I therefore feel myself bound to observe it.

No. III.

*Two Letters from a Friend, containing remarks on Rom. iv. 11.
and a new Version of chap. xi.*

The friend alluded to in the Appendix, No. I., having known that I was engaged in printing the foregoing Conversations, sent me, the other day, the two following Letters. As they both relate to passages of Scripture, of which I have endeavoured to give some explanation in the preceding pages, and as they are very generally brought forward in the argument respecting infant baptism, I shall here present them to the reader. I have no doubt that every one who peruses them will especially consider the new translation of Rom. xi., along with the critical notes which accompany it, a very valuable communication. It furnishes an excellent specimen of the additional perspicuity which may be communicated to an English version of the

Scriptures, by a careful comparison of the idiom of our own language with that of the original.

My dear Friend,

I am glad to hear that you are about to get out of the press, although experience prevents me from being very sanguine respecting the success of your arguments. I have been much disposed, for years past, to adopt the words of Dr Priestley, in his *Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, Part II. p. 96. "From the course of my observation," says he, "if persons be turned of forty or fifty years of age, and if by reading, thinking, or conversation," (he might have added without these,) "they have been long settled in their opinions, it is not one case in a hundred in which any change will be produced by these means." I have known, indeed, not a few, both clergy and laity, very doubtful about infant baptism; and some of the latter fully persuaded that it has no support in Scripture, who yet, like Sir Isaac Newton, and Mr Speaker Onslow, and others, never seem to think it a matter of practical renunciation, or the contrary, of obedience. On the other hand, it must be owned, that with some, this and such things are put out of their place, rated beyond the degree of importance in which they are exhibited by God, seem to engross almost all the attention they bestow upon religion, and become ties of mere sectarian attachment.

It may be, and is no doubt, a Hebraism, when Paul said, "God sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel;" but its import assuredly is, that the gospel is the first thing; and holiness also is declared by him to be that without which "no man shall see the Lord." Where the faith of the one, and the cultivation of the other, are not as conspicuous as zeal for positive institutions, for those especially which, from national sentiment and habit, are unpopular, it is much to be dreaded, that church alliance is but a mode of self-love, and its enjoyments the result of pleasing ourselves, or the gratification of that vanity in which conscious singularity often indulges. I cannot sit down to execute my purpose without this introduction.

I am still of opinion, that the passages of the epistle to the Romans, generally introduced in the argument respecting in-

fant baptism, are not plainly [and correctly rendered in our English version. I wish I could do more justice to the views which, in my judgment, should be entertained of their meaning, than I can hope for, either from my ability or my present occupation. You shall have, however, what I promised; and let the version I propose be corrected or confuted by better scholars and closer students of the word of God. It is plain to me, that in Romans iv. 11. and 12: the coherence of the Apostle's words is interrupted, in our version, by an error in punctuation, by the division of one sentence into two verses, and by the mistranslation of a word, of which every *tyro* is as good a judge as the ablest critic. The words, as we render them, are these, "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also; and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised." It appears to me that they should be translated thus, "*He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith in the uncircumcised, that he was to be* (or that he should be) *the father of all the uncircumcised believers, that righteousness should be* (or was to be) *imputed to them also, and* (that he was also to be) *the father of the circumcised, to these not merely circumcised, but who tread in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham while uncircumcised.*" No freedom, I trust it will appear, is used with these verses, besides what is necessary in putting them in an English garb, and in reading them as one sentence, which they really are. The words which begin verse 12. in our version, are, in my judgment, actually governed by, and inseparably connected with, the verb *was to be*, or *should be*, in the preceding verse, the words *might be*, used by our translators instead of them, being not only an erroneous rendering of *εἶναι*, the Greek word, but expressing an idea very different from that which it is intended to convey. If Abraham was circumcised that he *might be* the father, &c. then these stood related as cause and effect; but circumcision was merely intended to confirm, as a visible symbol or pledge, the truth of

the promises he received, and thereby to strengthen his faith and that of his posterity in the accomplishment of them. It is true that *εἶναι* is the *present* of the infinitive; but that it expresses what is future is evident, and nothing is more usual in the New Testament than such exchange of tenses. See *εἶναι* so employed Matt. xxii. 23. Acts xxiii. 28. Our translators render it in verse 13. just as I propose it should be rendered in verse 11. "For the promise, that he *should be* the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith." Circumcision, then, was not a pledge of those being in a state of salvation on whom it was performed, but a pledge of the imputation of righteousness to believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, and affording, consequently, no foundation for the idea that the infants of believers were, or are, as such, related to God by any other tie than other infants. Believing parents, who are under the influence of the commandment to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, may expect the divine blessing in their obeying it, though not absolutely and without any exception, any more than ministers of the gospel, who are assured, 1 Tim. iii. 16., that in fulfilling their office, they shall save themselves and those who hear them. Children and hearers may in both cases prove unbelievers, and be cast away; but it shall not be so, it should seem; with many such, if the promises of God are sure.

Yours, ever.

March 20. 1811.

My dear Friend,

The eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans is, in my opinion, still more erroneously rendered than the fourth chapter. Attention to its scope, and to the true meaning of those verses which have been most misapprehended, will, if I mistake not, shew that it is wholly inapplicable to the hypothesis concerning the state of the infants of believing parents. But the parts of the chapter are so closely connected, that the scope must be considered, and I must give you the trouble of reading

a version of the whole. I shall try also to note the reasons of the alterations which I take the liberty of suggesting.

Every one will agree, that the Jewish idea of the relation which that people supposed to subsist between them and Jehovah, was one, and a great, obstacle in the way of the progress of the gospel among them. To oppose and overthrow this idea, and the national and religious pride which it fostered, and from whence it sprung, was, therefore, an object to which the Apostles paid the closest attention. Whatever special purpose was in view in their epistles to the churches, every one of which contained more or fewer of the Jews, this was not forgotten. In the preceding chapter of this epistle, Paul shews very explicitly, that there was no difference between Jew and Gentile, but that both stood on the same footing before God, for acceptance in his sight. To prove this, he produces passages from the writings of Moses and the prophets, and from the Psalms, and points out their meaning and application to his contemporary countrymen. In the eleventh chapter he considers the objection urged against his doctrine by the Jews, that if it were true, God had universally and perpetually rejected his people. The desolation of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the nation had not yet actually taken place, though not more than twelve years after this they were accomplished by the Romans. But, so infatuated were the Jews, that though all their own prophets had predicted these, and although Jesus had explicitly and repeatedly forewarned them, they yet disbelieved both. The Apostle, however, here declares, that this national rejection did not affect the salvation of individuals; that although the blood of the Son of God was upon the nation, individuals among them, confessing and forsaking their iniquity, should find mercy; that he himself was a proof of this; and, in fact, that no spiritual and saving relation had subsisted at any time between Jehovah and Israel as a nation. The nation at large, in former periods, in the days, for instance, of Elijah and of Isaiah, were described by these prophets in terms which suited their character in Paul's time. There was only a remainder or a fragment of Israel, either then or formerly, and that entirely by free favour, who were Israelites indeed; the rest, even the majority equally in times ancient and modern, were under the

ing and hardening effects of sin. There were prospects, however, of better times. The salvation of individuals among the Jews at that time, shewed that there were no bars in the way of any other Jews being saved who should believe; nay, the effectual calling of so many in the first period of the preaching of the gospel, might be regarded as the first fruits of a future harvest, as an earnest of what should hereafter take place when the great mass of the nation should embrace the gospel, become really and truly, and not merely externally, holy, and be related to God by other ties than those by which he had formerly distinguished them, however strict and intimate these might have been. He warns the Gentile Christians of this mystery or secret purpose of God, to prevent them from cherishing a Jewish spirit towards his countrymen, and from regarding them with the same haughty disdain, on account of their obduracy and depressed circumstances, which they entertained towards the Gentiles. Gentile believers should remember their own origin, and the necessity of their persevering in the faith, that they might continue the people of God. The nation of Israel were, indeed, at that period, about to be treated by God with just severity and apparent enmity; but the time should come, when the promises made to the fathers would be fulfilled, and on account of these, they should yet be grafted into the true olive tree. They would then no longer remain in unbelief, but would be manifestly the objects of the same love, on the part of God, as the believing Gentiles, the entrance of the fulness of whom into the family of God should be attended with a general conversion of the Jews, &c.

Such seems to be the scope and sum of the contents of this chapter, which will appear from what I hope may be esteemed a faithful version into English idiom of the Apostle's words.

*The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans
translated into English.*

I say then, Hath God rejected his people? Let it not be! For I am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not rejected the people whom he hereto-

fore acknowledged as his. (1) Do ye not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he complained (2) to God respecting Israel, "Oh Lord, they have cut off thy prophets and overthrown thine altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life?" But what saith the reply of God to him? I have reserved for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed a knee to the image of Baal. In like manner, at the present time there is a remainder according to the free choice of God. And if by free favour, it is not in any respect by works, otherwise *the word* free favour is not free favour; and if by works, it is not any more by free favour, otherwise *the word* work is not any more a work. What then *follows*? What Israel sought after, that they did not obtain, but the chosen have obtained, and the rest are blinded until the present time; (3) as it is written, God hath abandoned them (4) to a spirit of stupefaction, to eyes which see not, and ears which hear not. And David says, Their table shall become a snare, and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a requital to them; their eyes shall be darkened so as not to see, and their back shall be bowed down continually.

I say then, have they stumbled so as to fall (5) *irretrievably*? Let it not be! But by their transgression (6) *salvation hath been effected* for the Gentiles, to excite them to emulation. And if their transgression *prove* the riches of the world, and if their diminution *prove* the riches of the heathen, how much rather *will* their fulness? For I speak to you the Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I shew the glory (7) of my office, if by any means I may excite my countrymen to emulation, and may save some of them. For if the rejection of them be the reconciliation of the world, what shall their resumption (8) be but life from the dead! For, if the first fruit be holy, *so shall be* (9) the mass; and if the root be holy, *so shall be* (10) the branches. And if some of the branches were cut off, and thou being a wild olive branch, (11) wert engrafted instead (12) of them, and becamest a partaker with others of the root, even of the fruitfulness of the olive tree, do not treat those branches with disdain; and if thou dost treat them with disdain, *be warned* that thou bearest not the root, but that the root beareth thee. Dost thou say then, that "the branches were cut off

that I might be engrafted." Well—they were cut off by unbelief, and thou continuest by faith; be not elated, but fear! For if God did not spare the natural branches, *take heed* lest he spare not thee? Behold then the benignity and the rigour of God! rigour towards those who fell, but benignity towards thee; if by this benignity thou dost persevere, since, *if thou dost not*, thou also shalt be cut off: And they too, on the other hand, if they do not persist in unbelief, shall be grafted in, for God is able again to engraft them. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is naturally wild, and wert grafted beyond nature, into the good olive tree, how much rather shall they, according to nature, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I am not desirous, brethren, that ye should be unacquainted with this secret; that ye may not be wise in your own conceit; that obduracy hath taken place in (13) a part of Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles enter in. And so all Israel shall be saved; according as it is written, "The Deliverer shall come out of (or on account of) (14) Zion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and this my covenant *shall be* (15) *fulfilled* by me, when I shall take away the punishment of their sins." With respect to the gospel, they are treated as enemies (16) for your sake, but according to the election, they *shall be* (17) beloved for the sake of the fathers, for the gifts and the inheritance of God are unchangeable. For as ye formerly did not believe God, but now have obtained mercy through their unbelief, in like manner have they not believed through the mercy shewn to you, &c.

NOTES.

(1) *Foreknown*, says Dr Campbell, *Dissertat.* iv. § 21. prefixed to his *Translation of the Evangelists*, as our translators here render $\pi\rho\sigma\gamma\gamma\omega$, conveys, to my mind, no meaning whatever. To foreknow, signifies always to know some event before it happens; but no event is here mentioned, so that we are at a loss to discover the object of the foreknowledge mentioned. Is it only the existence of the people? Even this is not explicitly said; but if this were the writer's intention, still we should be at a loss for the sense. There is nothing in this circumstance which distinguishes God's people from any other people, for the

existence of all were equally foreknown by him ; whereas here something peculiar is plainly intended, which is suggested as a reason to prevent our thinking that God would ever totally cast them away. Though nothing, to appearance, can answer more exactly than the English *foreknow* to the Greek *προγινω*, it in reality labours under a double defect. The first is in the rendering *the preposition* ; the prepositions in the two languages, though nearly, are not perfectly correspondent, especially in composition. With us the inseparable preposition *fore*, prefixed to *know*, *tell*, *see*, and *shew*, always relates to some event which is *known*, *told*, *seen*, or *shewn*, before it happens : whereas the Greek preposition *προ* does not necessarily relate to an event, and signifies no more than *before this time*. The difference in these idioms may be thus illustrated. A friend introducing a person with whom he supposes me unacquainted, says, “ *This is such a man,*” I make answer, “ *I knew him before ;*” I should speak nonsense if I should say, “ *I foreknew him,*” yet in Greek I might properly say *προγινω*. That God knew Israel before, in the ordinary meaning of the word *knowing*, could never have been suggested as a reason to hinder us from thinking that he would ever cast them off ; for, from the beginning, all things and nations are equally known to God. But the word *γινωσκω*, in Hellenistic use, has all the latitude of signification which the verb *יָדַע*, *jadang*, has, being that whereby the Seventy commonly renders the Hebrew word. Now the Hebrew word means not only to know, in the common acceptance, but to *acknowledge* and *approve*. Nothing is more common in Scripture than this use ; “ *The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous,*” Ps. i. 6. ; that is, *approves*. Then will I profess to them, I never knew you, *ᾔγνων*, *acknowledged you for mine*, Matt. vii. 23. If any man love God, the same is known of him, 1 Cor. viii. 3. *acknowledged*. Add to this the import of the preposition, and the meaning of the passage is clear and pertinent.

To the references of Dr Campbell, we may add the following places where the word must have the same sense : Gen. xxiv. 54., 2 Sam. xvi. 10. 11., xviii. 23., 1 Kings xxii. 22., 2 Kings ii. 17., Prov. xii. 10., Ps. xxxi. 8., Hos. x. 20., Rom.

viii. 29., Matt. v. 12., vi. 13., viii. 32., Luke viii. 32., 1 Cor. vii. 15., viii. 6., xi. 6. 2 Thess. ii. 11.

(2) *Εντυγχανω*, which our translators here render *to make intercession*, signifies, primarily, *to meet with any one*; secondarily, *to address*, or *to accost*, *to speak to a person in any way*; rendered Acts xxv. 24. *dealt with*, it had been better rendered *have addressed me*; it signifies also *to undertake the cause of*, *to aid any one*, as in Rom. viii. 27.; with *κατα*, as here, it signifies *to accuse or complain of*, and though not found any where in this sense in N. T. or LXX., it is so-rendered 1 Maccabees viii. 32., x. 61., iii. 4., xi. 25.

(3) The words preceding *until the present time*, should be marked in a parenthesis, to shew that there is an interruption in the sentence; but in this place, as in others, it contributes to perspicuity, to place the whole sentence together in all its parts, and to postpone the parenthesis, for careless readers may be apt here, as elsewhere, to connect these words immediately following with those within the parenthesis, and not with the preceding.

(4) There is here an instance of an idiom which frequently occurs in our version, to the perplexity of the attentive, but mere English reader. In Hebrew, and in the Greek as spoken by Hebrews, active verbs frequently denote nothing more than permission. The reader may consult Dr Campbell's note on Matt. vi. 13., and Dr Macknight's remarks on this subject, and the instances he quotes in his fourth Preliminary Essay, Vol. i. p. 96. 97. 8vo. London edition of his Translation of the Epistles.

Among many instances of this in Scripture, the reader may consult Acts ii. 27. xiii. 29. 35., Rev. xi. 2.

It would be totally inconsistent with the nature of the ever blessed and holy God, to suppose that he gives or sends moral evil to his creatures, unless this be understood in a very different sense from that in which he gives every good and perfect gift. In like manner are we to understand the words which follow, where the imperative mode is retained in English, in which they are expressed in Hebrew and in Greek. But to retain the idioms of any language when these are opposite to those of another in which we wish them to be understood, is not to

translate the meaning of the words, but to misrepresent it. It ought to be known by all the readers of the word of God in English, that in it, imperatives very frequently are to be understood as mere futures. I beg to refer those who wish to be satisfied on this subject, but who do not understand the Hebrew or Greek languages of the Scripture, to Bishop Lowth's Lectures on Hebrew Poetry, page 181. Oxford edition, and Michaelis, Note, No. 74; to Lowth the elder, in his Notes on Isaiah ii. 9., vi. 7. 8., xxix. 9.; in his Commentary on the Prophets;—and to Dr Campbell's Note on Luke xxii. 36.

It is very strange that Dr. Macknight should say that the imperatives in this passage ought to be translated in the future, and yet that he should omit to do so. What are persons, wholly ignorant of the original, and of the modes of expression in it, to think, who have never heard that any such thing was ever proposed? The following instances are some, out of many more, which may be consulted; and of these let the reader judge for himself. Gen. ix. 1., xii. 3., xx. 7., xlii. 18., xlv. 18., Deut. xxxii. 49; 50., Ps. xxxvii. 27., xc. 3., Prov. iii. 4., Is. ii. 9., vi. 10., viii. 10., xxiii. 16., xxix. 9., xxxvii. 30., liv. 1., Zech. xiii. 7., John ii. 19., Gal. vi. 2., James v. 1. On these, and on other passages referred to below, the following observations may be made, for the better understanding of these, and for confirming the view given of them.

1st, That blessings are promised to creatures imperatively, of which God alone is the author, as those on Noah and Abraham, Gen. ix. 1., xii. 2., Matt. x. 13., and Luke i. 38.

2dly, That events not at all depending on the will of man, nor in his power, are so expressed; e. g. the death of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 50.

3dly, That events expressed imperatively in the Old Testament, are, in the New Testament, sometimes, though not always, quoted and translated in the future, and represented there, as mere predictions of what should come to pass; e. g. Zech. xiii. 7. compared with Matt. xxvi. 31., Is. vi. 10. compared with Matt. xlii. 14., Mark iv. 1., Luke. viii. 10., John xii. 40., Acts xxviii. 26. Such imperatives are also quoted as mere prophecies; e. g. Ps. lxxix. 25., cix. 8., Acts i. 16. 20.

4th, Commands are given, i. e. the language of the imperative mode is used, to persons who were not intended to execute

these, nor who actually did so. Dr Campbell thus very properly illustrates Luke xxii. 36., and appeals, in proof of this, to the analogous instance of Isaiah xiv. 21.

5th, Brute animals are addressed imperatively, Ezek. xxxix. 17, 18. Rev. xix. 17, 18.

6th, Jesus Christ employed this mode in predicting his own death, John ii. 19.

7th, There are various readings in manuscripts of good authority, and in ancient versions, where imperatives, in such connection, are in the future, e. g. John ii. 19. in Syriac, is future; and 2 Tim. iv. 14. which though subjunctive in Greek is nearly allied to the imperative, is in the Alexandrian Manuscript *αποδωσει*, *he will requite*, which reading coincides more exactly with 2 Cor. xi. 15.

Upon the whole, it may be observed, in the words of Dr Campbell, that "connection and attending circumstances are absolutely necessary to fix the meaning of words. No two things differ more than petition and command, yet both are expressed in the imperative mode. Nay, the same mode may be properly expressed in offering supplication to God, and in giving orders to a servant." To shew the conceits and absurdities which men have adopted in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the propriety of applying to the scope of the Scriptures, and the genius of the language used in them, to understand their meaning, it may be added, that some of the Fathers, who regarded Ps. cix. as containing imprecations on Judas, and not mere predictions of his guilt and punishment, say, that it contains thirty execrations on him, being one for every piece of money he received from the Sanhedrim for betraying Jesus!!

(5) *ωα*, it is well known, denotes not merely the final cause, (*that*, in the sense of *to the end that*), as our translators render it (unintelligibly surely) here, but merely the event; a remark, however common, important in no small degree for correcting errors in our version elsewhere. *πιπτω*, which we render *fall*, has not only this primary sense, but secondarily, both in the classical and sacred writers, it signifies to fall so as to be utterly subverted; even as (see Dr Taylor's note on this place) we say, to *fall* in battle; or as Mr Gibbon entitled his history, of the decline and *fall* of the Roman Empire. In this sense it is

used Matt. vii. 25—27., Luke vi. 49.; xiii. 4., Acts-xv. 16.; Heb. xi. 30., Rev. xiv. 8., xvi. 19., xviii. 2.

(6) It may be very confidently affirmed, that *παραπτωμα* has nowhere in Scripture the signification of *fall*, as in the common English version, unless this be understood in a moral sense; it always denotes *sin*, *transgression*, *offence*, or somewhat similar; and, indeed, it was not by the fall or national catastrophe of the Jews, that salvation came to the Gentiles; this succeeded their rejection, but was not its effect. The salvation of the Gentiles was predetermined and-promised to Abraham, and resulted not from the punishment of Israel, but their national sin in crucifying the son of God. The Apostle says verse 30th., that the mercy of the Lord was extended to the Gentiles through their *unbelief*, and the great instance of that unbelief was this sin, a deed ordained of God, though perpetrated in wickedness, for the salvation not only of Gentiles, but of Jews individually, and even of not a few of those who were guilty of his death.

The word *diminution*, which follows, is used nowhere else in the New Testament, except 1 Cor. vi. 7., where it is rendered *fault*; and if it denote here the *depression* and *rejection* of Israel, it must be understood to express also their *offence* along with their *punishment*.

(7) The word *magnify* here is ambiguous. The Apostle surely did not intend to represent his office, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, as more illustrious and dignified than it really was. He sets forth the great and glorious effects produced by the preaching of the gospel among heathens, that they might form just and adequate ideas of his ministry. Although he sought not glory from men, he was yet anxious that these should be entertained by the churches wherever he came, or when he wrote to them. See 1 Cor. iv. 1., &c.; 2 Cor. iv. 6. 7., v. 20. &c. &c. The Vulgate uses the word *illustra* in this place, and it seems by no means inapposite, though a better version of it than that here given might perhaps be proper, but which does not at present occur to me.

(9, 10) The mere English reader should know that there is not any verb in the original of this sentence, but that the words literally rendered are as follows; "For if the first fruit holy, the mass also; and if the root holy, so the branches." There.

is no ellipsis more common in the original Scriptures, than that of the substantive verb. It is often necessary to supply it, as here, to make sense in English. The part of the verb, however, to be supplied, depends on the meaning of the sentence. Now, it is equally plain, that the Apostle in this place writes of the conversion of the mass of the Jews, as that this conversion had not then, and has not yet, taken place. It is described throughout all this context as future, and the ellipsis in one verse relating to it, is supplied by the translators in the future tense. What *shall* the receiving of them be (say they, ver. 15.) but life from the dead ! This is very proper, for ver. 23. the Apostle says, they *shall be* grafted in ; and ver. 26. all Israel *shall be* saved ; and ver. 28. I *shall* take away, or pardon, their sins ; and ver. 31. they *shall* obtain mercy. It is plain that the Apostle speaks of one and the same event in verses 15. and 16. What he calls their *resumption*, (the proper sense of *πρὸςληψίς*,) in ver. 15., which our translators say *shall be*, is in ver. 16. described as their becoming *holy*. If the one be properly expressed in the future tense, the other ought not to be expressed in the present, being indeed contemporaneous. It is not then of federal or relative holiness, as it has been called, of which the Apostle here writes ; for without attempting to refute an idea foreign altogether to the New Testament, and which some men of ability who yet defend infant baptism have deserted, it is plain in these verses, that the Apostle writes of the Jews as distinguished from Gentiles ; and that the holiness which is here mentioned, is that which shall appear when Israel are again resumed as the people of the Lord, when they are grafted into Christ, from whom they seem cut off at present ; and when the Lord is merciful to all their unrighteousness and transgressions, according to the promise of the new covenant. The reception of many thousand Jews in the Apostolic age, was, like the first fruits, a pledge of the future harvest ; it stood in the Apostle's mind, and is produced by him as a reply to the objection with which the chapter sets out, " Hath God cast away his people ?"

It has given me great satisfaction to find, after an extensive search among critics and commentators, that in the Tigurine Latin Translation, i. e. that published at Zurich in 1545, the

words are rendered *erunt sancti*, they shall be holy; and that in the Great Bible, as it is commonly called, published first in 1539, being the first version in English, after the accession of Queen Elizabeth, and known by the name of Abp. Cranmer's Bible, the preface being superscribed and written by him, they are also translated *shall be holy*. I extract this from the edition 1562.

I find also that Glassius, in that treasure of Scripture knowledge *Philol. Sacra*, p. 1892, Edit. 1743, so explains them; repeated also by the late editor, Dathe. Grotius also inclines to this sense. Erasmus Schmidius supplies the ellipses in the future tense. J. B. Carpzov. in his *Strictur. in Epist. ad Romanos*, Helmstadt, 1758, so understands it, page 266, 267. And the passage is thus paraphrased by Richard Baxter, (See his *Paraphrase of the New Testament*,) who thus expresses his idea of the meaning of the verse, "For if God hath accepted those Jews which are believers, who are to the whole nation but as the first fruits to the lump, he will accordingly accept the nation, *when they come to Christ* as we have done, and, as he accepted Abraham and their believing ancestors, *he will also accept them*. And, if those Apostles be honoured of God as holy, who from them are sent with the gospel into the world, *so shall the broken branches be when they are restored*."

The concurrence of so many Pædo-baptists in this interpretation will, it is hoped, convince the readers, that the words are not here wrested to favour preconceived notions, by which, the writer deceives himself, if he is influenced. It is desirable, then, that Gentile believers may not henceforth cherish an opinion which propagates delusion and deceit among their children, and which, in whatever sense the verse be understood, refers to the Jews, and not to them.

(11) *Tree* is here supplied by our translators, (no such word being in the original,) but with manifest impropriety. A *branch* or *scion* may be engrafted in a *tree*, but who ever heard of one tree being engrafted in another? This operation, at least, has another name.

(12) For *among them* in the text of the English version, is more properly supplied, in the margin of that version, *for them*. The Syriac translates it *in place of them*, and Beza *for them*, and

Dr Macknight *instead of them*. In this sense, certainly, the preposition ^{εν} may be properly translated: in its ordinary one, *in* or *among*, it cannot be here understood, consistently with the whole strain of the Apostle's argument, and with his assertions respecting the Jews being cut off.

(13) Our translators render this, *blindness in part* hath happened to Israel; but the blindness was not partial, but total; they had no true discernment of Christ, or of his kingdom and salvation. *Part* respects the nation, not their blindness, and is here literally and really put for nearly the *whole*, or a *great part*; a small part only, or remainder and fragment of the nation, being enlightened respecting the Messias, and is thus contrasted with *all* Israel in the subsequent verse. The same mode of expression is used by the Apostle, 2 Cor. ii. 5., "But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part; that I may not overcharge you all;" which should be rendered *it was only a part of you*, (intending to describe the person guilty of incest, and those who supported him,) *that I may not lay the burden on you all*. Several places in the New Testament and Septuagint, and in classic writers, both Greek and Latin, might be quoted, where the same language is used.

(14) In the Septuagint version of this quotation from Isaiah, the deliverer is represented as coming, not *out of*, but on account of, *ενεκα*, Sion.

(15) In this verse, also, there is not any verb, which must be supplied, and is supplied, by our translators; the question is, with propriety or not? There was no need of the Apostle saying what God's covenant *is*, i. e. what its promises are; his object is, to declare that it should be fulfilled to them. The translators have omitted to render *παρεα*, which evidently governs *εμεις*, joined by them improperly to *covenant*. *Testamentum tum erit—tum expeditur*. Vide Bengelii Gnomon in loc.

(16, 17) Considerable difficulties appear in this verse, whatever views of it may be embraced; but it seems to me that the Apostle is not here writing of the disposition and conduct of the nation of Israel towards God, but of his righteous treatment of them, and of the effects of this, as contrasted with their future circumstances, when saved, called, forgiven, and thus the objects of love nationally, or in the mass. *Εχθρος*, the word here

rendered enemies, hath both an active and passive sense, i. e. it signifies not only *an enemy*, but *one treated as such*, i. e. *hated*; as in Latin it denotes *invisus*, as well as *inimicus*. Among the various interpreters whom I have turned over, Beza and Wakefield alone seem so to understand it, the former rendering it *quatenus evangelium non admittunt, sunt Deo exosi*, and the latter translating it *disliked*. It is used in this sense in this epistle v. 10., where the Apostle is not describing the actual reconciliation of believers to God, but the atonement of his own Son, by which his displeasure, and the effects of it, are, through his mercy, averted from sinners. It is also so used Col. i. 21. It is true, God is not to be regarded, strictly speaking, as hating any of his works, for this very atonement is the great instance of his love, even to the most guilty, but still the word *hatred* is often used to express his displeasure towards sinners, the treatment of them resulting from his nature and denunciations, and the punishment actually inflicted on them on account of sin. See, among many passages, Prov. vi. 16., viii. 13., Is. lxiii. 10., Jer. xii. 8., Hos. ix. 15., Mal. i. 3., &c.

Εχθρος certainly denotes here, as it does in some of the above places, God's hostile treatment of Israel on account of sin, his having abandoned them to moral indiscernment and insensibility, and their approaching desolation, dispersion, and final rejection as the nation of God. With this the Apostle contrasts their future condition, when, in consequence of his free choice, they shall *be beloved*, in the mass; when, believing the gospel, they shall come in, in all their fulness, with the fulness of the Gentiles, and inherit eternal life. It seems, then, that the word *are*, supplied by our translators, before *beloved*, is erroneous, on the same principle as it has been said *are* is in verse 16. before *holy*, and that the ellipsis of the verb, which is here also wanting, should be supplied with the future *shall be beloved*. But how shall they be beloved *for the fathers' sake*? Was not the generation contemporary with the Apostle, who, he says, were *hated*, and the succeeding generations, anterior to the call of the Jews in the mass, the children also of these fathers? According to the hypothesis which hath been reared on this and similar expressions, the children of believers are all, at least while in a state of infancy, equally related to God, and considered as

holy and beloved. The consideration of the sovereignty of God; who hath a right to shew mercy on whom he will shew mercy, and to abandon others to obduracy, will not solve or remove this difficulty. For if he hath been pleased to declare his purpose of mercy towards any of his creatures, to invest them with any privileges, or to give them an interest in any promises, these doubtless, whatever may be their previous demerit or circumstances, shall be made good. If God here declares that *Israel are beloved for their fathers' sake*, how then do we explain it, that the nation who were the children of these fathers should be treated as enemies for eighteen hundred years—from that time to this? Our valued friend, Mr Wardlaw, writes as if these were the words of the Apostle, and thinks that language is used concerning Israel *in their present state of unbelief*, (Three Lectures on Romans iv. 9—25. page 58.) and no wonder that he should say “*it seems inexplicable, but on some such principle as he adopts.*” I am much-mistaken, if his principles, however plausibly supported, (by him, I am sure, *bona fide*,) will serve, as he judges, to explain it.

Socinians, and other adversaries of the atonement of Christ, have taken the same ground; neglecting to compare these with similar and fuller passages of Scripture, and interpreting them in the very strictest sense, they have endeavoured to invalidate the declarations of God respecting believers, that *he hath forgiven them for Christ's sake*, that they are saved *on his account*, and receive *faith on his behalf*, &c. “Is not the same thing said,” they object, “of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, Moses, David, &c.?” But if they, and those who attempt to establish the baptism of infants on this ground, will compare this language with the language of similar passages where the idea contained in them is unfolded and more fully expressed, both might perceive that the objections of the one, and the hypothesis of the other, are equally untenable, so far as this supports them.

When the Lord is represented as bestowing blessings on Israel *for the sake of the fathers*, it appears that the *promises made to them* are the subjects referred to. Thus Moses writes Exod. xxxii. 13. “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst

per to give them a place at the end of your publication, it is hoped they will meet with indulgence on the part of candid readers. Though they may rather be considered as digressing from the general question to which your papers relate, yet as travellers on a journey are not always averse to contemplate the prospects on the sides of the road along which they proceed; your readers may perhaps feel relieved by some change of the subject. As I have not seen your papers, I do not know how far I shall adopt every part of your arguments. Indeed, I have rather reason to believe, that in some parts I may differ from you. It will give me much pleasure, however, if you succeed in attracting the attention of Christians to a positive and significant law of Jesus Christ, which I have long been convinced is much misunderstood by many of them; and from the misunderstandings that prevail respecting which, great evils have arisen. But these, I trust, will be gradually done away by the growing prevalence of divine truth, which may God grant to be accompanied with an increasing desire to know and to practise all Christ's commandments. Faxit D. O!

THE END.

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